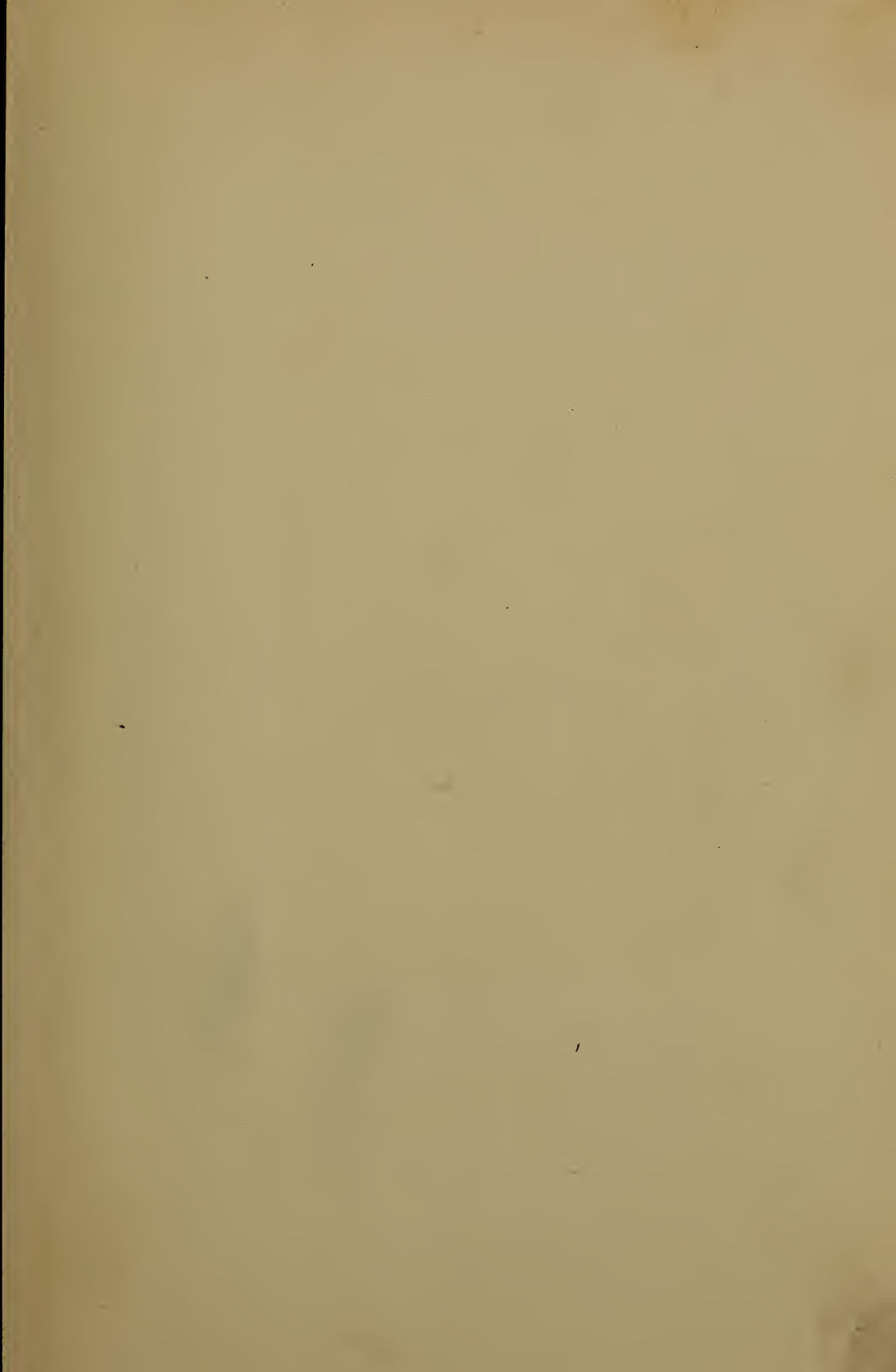


Class BJ 1581

Book .W74

Copyright N^o _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.





THE HUMAN WAY

BY
LOUISE COLLIER WILLCOX



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
M C M I X

BJ 1581
.W74



Copyright, 1909, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

All rights reserved.

Published September, 1909.

© Sep. 17, 1909

CL. A 246749

SEP 20 1909

ms. Oct. 1, 1909.

To
Mary Ellis

AUGUST 19TH, 1908

To one who lent life worth, an unworthy offering

e

*"With you a part of me hath passed away;
For in the peopled forest of my mind
A tree made leafless by this wintry wind
Shall never don again its green array.
Chapel and fireside, country road and bay,
Have something of their friendliness resigned;
Another if I would I could not find,
And I am grown much older in a day.
But yet I treasure in my memory
Your gift of charity, your mellow ease,
And the dear honor of your amity;
For these once mine, my life is rich in these.
And I scarce know which part may greater be—
What I keep of you or you rob from me."*

—GEORGE SANTAYANA



CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION—THE DECORATION OF LIFE . . .	I
I.	THE SERVICE OF BOOKS	19
II.	OUT-OF-DOORS	48
III.	THE CHILDREN	83
IV.	FRIENDSHIP	109
V.	HUMAN RELATIONS	130
VI.	THE AREA OF THE PERSONALITY	158
VII.	THE HIDDEN LIFE	194
VIII.	SOLITUDE	222
IX.	MEMORAT MEMORIA	250
X.	DETACHMENT	284



THE HUMAN WAY



THE HUMAN WAY

INTRODUCTION

THE DECORATION OF LIFE

AS childhood passes and the youthful flow of the blood and the eager outlook upon life slacken, the thoughtful are apt to see themselves endowed with a stretch of time somewhat arid and bare of decoration. Life's main punctuation points are unexhilarating tasks, requiring repetition at regular intervals.

Who cannot remember the shock with which youth first faced this personal share in existence, and noted with a certain nausea of despair the horrible discrepancy between desire and fulfilment? Our possessions, our powers, our vigour are insufficient to meet the demands laid upon them, and we realise that we begin to live by accepting an incurable deficiency. Our very thoughts are fragmentary and broken, and our guesses pitifully

THE HUMAN WAY

frail in the vast face of the Sphinx. We examine ourselves, and question what it all means and what is worth while, and the most fortunate among us are perhaps not those who find a facile answer. To most of us answers come slowly, by discipline rather than by inspiration; and the struggle is long before a reconciliation is reached.

But once he sincerely faces the truth that the universe is not set swinging to his tune, nor the interwoven tracks of the star-orbits drawn after his pattern, the wise man lays aside the clamouring desires of youth and looks about for means to decorate this bare and shivering bit of personal life; he searches for a garment of worth and dignity to wrap it round. No brave man accepts failure as an ultimate solution. Somehow, each one of us must press out of experience a result which, if it is not victory, is, at any rate, appeasement.

It is a new stage in development, however, when we turn to take stock of what decorations are attainable for the naked life we hold. By some strange inborn blindness to values we see the realms of the possible painfully meagre and unattractive. With the slow, strained eyes of disappointment we look at life, and, little by little, new values detach themselves and stand out for us. We find in the place of the easy pomps and powers we had hoped

THE TASK OF DECORATION

for, the world, responsive to prolonged effort and courage, presenting us, in return for our trouble, the joys of seeing and thinking and the rewards of disciplined feeling. The ancient way of reconciliation, the one-time religious attitude, has undergone great changes in modern times. The instruction to accept life as incurably evil, and to bear the cross as a test of submission, has changed into a counsel which makes for looking at life as mere rough but plastic material out of which a man must mould a successful figure. We no longer passively endure evil with patience, but actively we seize upon it and transform it. Surely there is less of defeat in this modern method. It is a call, not to submit, but to gird up one's loins and act and beget results.

That we enter life with an endowment of little more than blind desire is a truism. We want, at first, food, then physical comfort, then, bit by bit, what we see, and later what we hear and read of and desire creates thought. Out of the blind impulse to have comes the habit of recognising, planning, contriving means to better the culture of the imagination, wisdom to find in some mental shelter a life that partially, at least, satisfies us. And slowly but inevitably with the years thought creates form in the visible world. Our thoughts

THE HUMAN WAY

may be weak, ineffectual thoughts that draw lines in the face and make the shoulders stoop, the eyes shift; they may mark out a certain round of tasks daily completed, books kept or gardens planted; they may build railroad systems, or lay cables, or discover continents, or grope through untracked historic periods; they may build, or paint, or write poetry; but for good or for evil, for better or for worse, almost imperceptible or world-pervading, thoughts decorate existence with tangible forms. Thought, which is rich and productive, or self-centred and confined, as a man furnishes it with data to work upon, moulds the life. We can feed it upon the thoughts of other men or we can hearken to the wind of the spirit that blows as it lists. We can choose to live with the profoundest spirits who have been, or to feed on the casual and the haphazard, but we have to face the fact that ultimately our choice will body itself forth and face us; it will be as definite a form, as inextinguishable a factor of reality, as we ourselves are.

So it comes to seem but the short-sightedness of youth that wailed over limited scope for effort or an uncongenial atmosphere; for whatever atmosphere we desire and think about, we make; and whatever ideal we hold, we create; and only those who dream fitfully fail to make their dreams come

BOOKS AS GUIDES

true. To come slowly to this realisation is to accept no outlook as final. The transformation of what is naked and ugly into what is clothed and fair is the constant exercise of living, and in itself is exhilarating and liberating.

The most natural refuge of disappointed youth is the life with books. There we find, to our heartening, the solutions of the problems of those who have lived before us. There are no difficulties we have to face which have not, in some sort, already been coped with. To know in one's first discouragement that splendid army of thinkers and workers who have moulded life to its present proportions, who have refused to be beaten back by the odds against them, and who, even in the last gasps of the warfare, continued to note, for the benefit of those who were to follow, the ebb and flow, the gain and loss, the new grip and final assault upon life, this is to grasp fresh courage and to take new hold upon living. It is to come to see that there is never a moment so long as we breathe when all that we can do is done. Ever there is a task ahead, and if no other, we can set down the honest account of our own failure; we can even, perhaps, add to the grace and beauty of life by leaving a fair and clear account. This task, in itself, is a liberator for the discouraged soul. About us lie the victo-

THE HUMAN WAY

rious annals of other fighters who would not be content to die without multiplying visible forms, without translating crude emotion into intellectually wrought lines.

The visible world, too, is often thrown open to people by books; and once the wonder and beauty of mere seeing and hearing made known to us, it would be difficult indeed to find life utterly barren. "For a hundred men that can talk, there is one who can think," said John Ruskin, in one of his high-handed and sweeping generalities; "and for a thousand who can think, there is one that can see." To learn to see and to hear, to be initiated into the wonder and beauty, the infinitely curious and painstaking finish of the outer world, is to break open windows in the prison of the self and let in the healing light. Whether we trace geometrical patterns in the tiny enamelled faces of the flowers or on the wings of the myriad-hued insects, whether we rest the sight upon the curves of snow-capped mountain ranges or follow the figures of the starry constellations, the trained senses are a means of escape; a way out of the torturing confinement of a narrow egoism.

It is wonderful, considering the sameness of the shapes and sizes of our eyes and our ears, the great difference in our original capacities to see and

THE TRAINED SENSES

hear! A whistle of quick vibrations was recently used as an experiment in a lecture on the megaphone, and while some of the audience found the sound excruciatingly shrill and painful, a large part of the audience heard nothing at all. In a park where an average man recently asserted that there were no birds at all, or at best a few English sparrows, a naturalist, after two days' observation, counted two hundred different kinds of birds. For capacity yields to training, and to walk with a huntsman through a forest is to hear the whole wood alive and vocal where we had moved before in stolid indifference, hearing nothing; to walk with the painter over his daily round is to see Jones's barn and Smith's stock-yard suddenly decorated with undreamed-of detail, with shadows and colours and values and jagged skylines; to sit out at night with the star-lover is to find the floor of heaven studded with intricate geometrical figures, wheeling their gold and fire about between the awful coal-sacks of the interstellar spaces; and to turn from the vastness of the heavens and set the eye to the microscope is to become aware of the same wonder of skill, the same mystery of perfection in the jointure of a spider's leg as in the swinging of the stars along their orbits.

Beside the world of records, thought, and trained

THE HUMAN WAY

perceptions, nearer to us, even, than the visible beauty of the outward, concrete world, lies the whole range of human relations to work upon. Here, again, is a realm in which defeat is easy and victory is hard. It would even seem at times that the nearer earth the temperament, the less instructed and the more naïve, the easier it is to enter into comforting and easy relations with men. The more complex and difficult natures, those who make high and strenuous demands, have their own sorrows in the matter of comradeship and friendship. Probably the list of real friends decreases in number in exact ratio to the loftiness of the character. But surely none will close life's score without the memory of certain human relations which not only count for steady solace, but which have been, even if intermittently, sources of vivid delight and personal enlargement.

Closer yet, and more accessible, there lies ever about us all the constant renewing, the dawning life with its fresh possibilities, the hopeful realm of childhood. It is difficult to understand those who profess to love their kind and yet fail to love little children. It is not only the beautiful bloom and the freshness of children, but it is their great new chance that is so inspiring; it is the unwritten tablet of the childish mind which is so delightful in

CHILDHOOD

the midst of the great fatigue of much living and its baffling frustrations; it is the value of the untrammelled and unprejudiced thinking of the newcomer which makes a little child precious and fair beyond the capacity of any grown person. The grown man is valued for the scars and wounds of battle, but only about childhood do we see the trailing clouds of a serenity and innocence belonging to a purer clime than ours. If, for past sins, they are incarnate here, as some dare speculate, they yet bear about them the marks of large and heavenly memories, and a charitable providence is slow to initiate them into the more sordid values, the more tarnished conditions of this earth. Even when a child enters life in the meanest, the slovenliest of human surroundings, even when self-defense and overreaching are inculcated with the use of his little legs and tongue, how detached and how innocent, how apart and untainted the childhood of him still appears; he seems to us to be imitating, indeed, but yet holding his heart apart, unconcerned and unmoved by his own actions.

For the sake of childhood, too, if for no other, we work at the adjustment of human relations. We extend the new hope to the new generation, we pardon this whole world of fragmentary beings about us, and set ourselves to lifting the human

THE HUMAN WAY

conditions and, wherever we can, to keeping them fair and acceptable. Wherever a home receives a child into it the stirring of the physical life brings with it some spiritual regeneration, some regret for past lapses, some new courage for better living.

Books, then, and the outer world, friends, children, and the general human relations seem to be the first, the more elementary, external, and graspable decorations of life. They are the passageways only to the inner decoration, to the deliberate and wilful stretching of the area of the personality, the forcing of selfish interest to let go while one reaches out over the whole of the conceived world, identifying one's self with all life, beautifying, inspiring, controlling the secret places of the soul, the thoughts and desires of the silence, till even dreams and visions shall add their share to the great reconciliation. Then, the threshold once passed, since no growth begun can ever utterly stop, the higher forms of life begin of their own apparent initiative to yield up their meanings. Poetry will have a new and a vital significance, religious symbols will convey their essence, we shall dare to scan our past and make festivals out of the memories of its sacred moments, and the solitude wherein we meet ourselves alone will finally become as a chamber of quiet and appeasement.

THE BEAUTY OF THE PASSING HOUR

There is a great deal of theory of life afloat nowadays, and as one moves about in the world one is continually being introduced to new panaceas, new ways of making this little trip of mortality worth while. As a matter of fact, wisdom is as old as the ages. All that can be said about life, by and large, has been said and repeated and reiterated, but men will rarely take wisdom at second hand. Each man not only does repeat the history of the world in his person, but he insists upon doing it. You may caution the child a thousand times that hot things burn, but he never realises it until he is burned, and then he adds that little fact to his data of the indubitable truths of the world: too much heat burns. So it is, humanity goes stumbling along toward wisdom; each generation partially repeating, with variations, the mistakes of the last, or changing them a little and inventing new errors. No close observer of life to-day but will see that the error of the average man now is in setting his whole faith on competition and wealth; instead of getting life out of a living, he is getting a living out of life.

And yet the pageant of the world, the myriad-coloured flood of the hours, the unutterable beauty and glory of the changing aspects of the world as it wheels itself along through space, is a vision too

THE HUMAN WAY

wonderful to barter for mere bread and meat and shelter. If it took as little time to convince men that money will not buy happiness as it does to teach the little child that fire burns, what a stride in progress would be made! If the man of moderate means could but realise that a multiplication of things will not advance him one step toward content, that all the things that are really worth while are free for the taking; and if we could make the rich man realise that his pomp is powerful only in so far as he uses it for the good of all men, and that mere display is vulgar and mere luxury enfeebling, what a good work we should accomplish! Shall we do away with differing conditions? That were impossible, even if any with open eyes for life in all its colour and variety would be willing to reduce it to a mere drab, dreary uniformity. But what we may accomplish is—so to increase the sympathetic understanding of all classes and kinds of men that rivalry may cease to impede progress, and the work of the world may be done for the joy of doing it, and the labour of the world may be so divided that each man shall live while he works, and work without blunting all his finer perceptions and swamping his keener, more delicate feelings, but literally combine his work with a heightening of his every power of enjoyment.

WHAT IS WORTH WHILE

This is not a mere Utopian dream, but it is the step in progress toward which Western civilisation has been stumbling through the centuries. Man has had to learn what his life is: he has had to learn, as the child learns that fire burns, that the thing that hangs beyond his reach and seems so desirable, is not really all that it seems, and that once he has grasped it in his hands it is as like as not to crumble into dust and ashes. He has had to learn that when he pauses to look behind upon such a course, he will find there but a mad strain, a feverish anxiety, and in the present he will have gained but the bitterness of satiety.

What is worth while, then? Is it worth while to spend a life in multiplying comforts and luxuries? After all, to have the best of food and the best of drink and the finest shelter is to put one's self on the level of a well-stalled ox or horse. To accumulate money and property, to heap them up and guard them and keep them, is to degrade the intelligence to the level of the bee or the ant. All these things are good; some of them are necessary. Food and drink and proper shelter, work and gain and increase of facilities are the by-products of living—they are necessary; but who mistakes them for the Life itself must pay for his error as if it were a sin.

And the Life itself? Let me quote from a book

THE HUMAN WAY

about the East: "Of a sudden it came to him that life itself was beautiful. Not effort only, not work nor play, success, achievement, wealth or fame or honour, but life itself. To live was good. The hours, the golden hours, were not just empty spaces between two clock-beats to fill with acts. They were themselves a glory. To sit and let the crystal flood of time pass over him was purest pleasure. Not his life only, but all life was good. To feel the great and glorious stream of the world's life pass on, to be one with Nature and hear her sing. For she goes forward to music. It is not always a battle chant she moves to. In her song there are all things. The shout of triumph and the cry of those who fall are there; but there are also other notes—the ripple of the river on its stones, the murmur of the trees, the rhythm of the sap that rises in them, the thunder in the hills. It is the song of infinite harmonies."

This is what comes upon us, with a misgiving that is almost a terror, when we pause to think that we stand here in the midst of mortal life and that we shall not pass this way again. Life is infinitely beautiful, and we, if we fail to find it so, must search for the defect, not around us nor outside us, but in ourselves. And if, in our chase for gross and material things, we have outrun the power to

THE HOLY CITY

live, to perceive, to enjoy, we must pay the penalty, for Nature is inexorable; we pay for our mistakes to the last jot, just as we pay for our sins.

But, after all, the outlook is not so black. Mistakes may be the steps of the stairs up which we are climbing. Every time we recognise one for what it is, and call it a step instead of a goal, we move on. And this generation is just in the act of lifting up one foot off the step of materialism to a step that shall be better worth while. We shall stand next on a plane where we shall realise, as the child who has been burned realises what fire is, that life is not all in the body, that its happiness is not in bread and meat, nor yet is it sport, or gayety, or excitement, or rivalry, or prominence, but growth and enlargement. He is happy who sees more, who understands more, who effects more this year than last. He is happy who finds his perceptions sharpening, his powers increasing, his sympathies widening, his helpfulness broadening. He is happiest who includes most life in himself and radiates most life around him.

There is still another, a final decoration of which we hear now and then, and of which, perhaps, occasionally, we have faint glimpses: it seems to be a secret chamber or a holy city; a sort of indescribable experience that means the cutting off of earthly

THE HUMAN WAY

ties, the finding one's self at last loosened from the clamour of desires, detached; and—if one may trust, as surely one may, those who have passed before us upon the path—it is the final triumph over self: once this experience is reached, it is never quite lost again, and the fear of drowning in black despair is past forever. For the great life, of which we see ourselves a tiny atom like a foam-bubble on the sea, goes on, and our life is as the life of the sea, and it matters never a whit when and how the personal bubble bursts. The individual fate is a fragment; and in the great sum of life and light, desire dwindles, success and failure, happiness and unhappiness, foolish and small distinctions are swamped, and we triumph in the life eternal. For, in the end, it matters far less than we suppose, if I live or you live, since life itself, everlasting and unquenched, lives, and we are but a moment in life's eternal sea.

So, out of the primitive impulse of desire with which we are born, grows the power to enjoy the wonders of creation and to accept life as it is, luminous with far-reaching interpretations, the power to offer ourselves bravely to the life of all the worlds. This frees us from the old-fashioned notion that life is mere trial and progress of death. It is much more nearly, as the Scotch catechism

DEATH

has put it: "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever." It is to lay hold on the sense of eternity here and now, and in an ever-present abundance of life to do away with the sense of the past and the future, of the before and after, and accept the wonderful heritage of the moment. Not that all the intellectual curiosity in the world or the widest swathe of sympathy can free a man from pain. Pain is the slow process of the enlarging of the consciousness; it is one of the constituent elements of life and knowledge, and these, as we know life now, would be less without it. It would be a vapid and insipid course across a plain if a man could pass through existence without suffering and without doubt. There is something in the original make-up of our kind that demands an element of precipitousness. If life is greatly worth while, it is not so because we can rely on the ultimate amiability of all things. The meaning of existence, if beautiful, is, so far, beautifully severe. It is futile to try to carry the moon in our pockets or to aim at an easy perfection, but we can learn to play the game vigorously, realising that our thoughts are ultimately somewhat effective, and that to know ourselves an integral part of an endless system and that endless system a part of us, is to decorate life with a fulness of joy and of pain

THE HUMAN WAY

which rescues us from the only irremediable tragedy: the tragedy of finding that the self ends with the self, and that our life has passed away as a tale that is *not* told.

And how shall he face death who has grown to full stature in this life? If, on this chance journey we call mortal life, he has not only found goodness and security and happiness, but has himself had power to create more goodness and more security and more happiness, shall he believe for an instant that all this can be blotted out of existence by a mere shadow called death? "Dying is hard, but death is easy," wrote a hero by a flickering camp light as he bled to death alone. The change, like all strange and new experiences, has its difficulties and pains, and then comes the new adventure, strange and thrilling; but may we not trust it to be gladder and greater than the experience we have just exhausted and cast behind us? Death, whatever else it is, is the next step onward.

I

THE SERVICE OF BOOKS

I HAVE spoken of books as being to the average man one of the easiest props to grasp at when once he has sincerely faced the fact that life is not an ultimate satisfaction, built to his desire. Books are so steady, so secure, so silent; they are so willing to give up their secrets for the asking and to show no embarrassing curiosity about us. We are saved confessing to them that life has failed us and that we are looking for a soothing balm. If, through the inexperience of youth, we fancied that life was dropped upon us from the skies, a finished and satisfactory product, we can turn to books without humiliating ourselves by saying that we have found it out, after all, to be but the roughest sort of raw material upon which we must try our strength. Considering how great the pain and the shock of this discovery of the discrepancy between expectation and reality, it is heartening to see how bravely men conduct themselves about it. It is

THE HUMAN WAY

a fine and considerate convention whereby they conceal the gashes of warfare and present a cheerful and acceptable face to the dangers and mysteries of the past and future, even though behind their backs, like guilty children with a stolen fruit, they hold the sense of all the thwartings and the buffetings of fate, the weakness and the incompleteness of the human equipment. After all, we feel it is a poor creature who would cry aloud on Fate or demand pity. For sincerely to face the fact that we are alone in the dark and need help is to recognise, too, the great army of mortals who are in the same plight. We see the reasonableness of cultivating thrift with the emotions, of collecting data and consulting those who, in the very teeth of the whistling winds of chance, have yet believed in and attained the unconquerable soul. We admit, to begin with, that always at the bottom of the cup there is the little heap of dregs, the dash of bitterness in each human experience, the rift in the sweetest lute, the slit in fortune's sack. Even he who seems most nearly to get his legitimate share of good must bow to the law of mutability. Disease, death, and decay surround us all, and let who will lay his hand upon his most blessed moment to stay it, yet it shall vanish into thin air.

Books have dealt more effectively, more grandly

EFFECTIVE COPING WITH FAILURE

with failure than with success, with tragedy than with contentment. Not, probably, because sadness is braver than cheer, but because a great deal of good cheer is the mere flow of the blood after food and exercise; it is the easy optimism of a big body and a blunted mind, and those of us who have looked long and honestly at life can only be consoled by those who have seen further into the depths than we have. Therefore it is that for one man who re-reads the Shakespearian comedies, there are a score who turn again and again to the *Sonnets*, to *Lear* and *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Othello*, for theory of life. From Jeremiah and the writer of Ecclesiastes down to the life-sickened Amiel it is the men who have seen deepest into the misery of human things who have consoled and fortified us. And it is only when we come to Browning's later work, to the great "If" in *La Saisiaz*, that we forgive him his robust optimism.

Perhaps we are too little inclined to give thanks for the present-day extension of comforts and sympathies to that great, wide-spreading body of pessimists and *révoltés* of the early nineteenth century. It was the outcry of writers like Heine and Leopardi, Shelley and Byron, Stendhal, Constant, Baudelaire, the army of the dissatisfied and the world-weary, who so pressed upon us the sense of

THE HUMAN WAY

failure that it helped us to develop means of bettering life.

"Help us," we should say to our authors—"help us to know ourselves and to extend our powers." Even the greatest suffering may be but the chance to extend being; for suffering, when it ceases to be merely personal and ignoble, is one of the swiftest initiators into consciousness. And to understand suffering, to cope with it, to turn it into the material of creation, we turn to books as the tools of thought. If we are, indeed, fragmentary and mutilated beings, yet we have the power of begetting results in this concrete world which shall outlive our mortal span. They do not come as swiftly as we would; often they take us at unawares, bearing little resemblance to our preconceived ideas, but yet the fact remains that we create, and that what we bring into the world obeys the natural law of increase and growth.

A book is a small, palpable, tactual body in which a man has presented his threefold self of body, mind, and spirit for a wider circulation than he could otherwise compass. He sets himself down in black and white, clarifying while he belittles, squeezing the self into a narrow compass. He blackens the outlines and defines the limits of a fluid personality, for the easier perception of other

INITIATORS INTO CONSCIOUSNESS

men. This makes it easier to find a man in his book than to know a man in his life. Literature is an incarnate statement, not only of the impulse of the moment—that strange and fleeting little entity we call the present—but of that to which the present belongs: the past of memory, the future of aspiration—the impulse which gathers up the whole of a man, past, present and to be, and sets it with its diminished body forth upon its travels. The worth of this convenient embodiment depends upon its truth, for its object is neither diversion nor yet instruction, but, as I have said, the enlargement of experience and the initiation into reality. The process of life is a gradual pushing out of the boundaries of consciousness. How far can we see? At first only the flickering candle a few inches off, then the bright-coloured ball a yard away, then the picture on the further wall of the room, and then we see from the window the horses in the street, and finally stars, moon and sun and cloud-shadows, or the fathomless spaces between the stars.

Life is on so vast a scale that it is only toward the end of a long experience that we begin to catch something of its rhythm, and to feel in vague sort the measure to which we have marched. Books condense the rhythm of life. There we see

THE HUMAN WAY

causes working themselves out into effects, and effects taking upon themselves the nature of fresh causes and begetting again more effects. Books, unlike real life, present themselves a finite whole, having beginning and end. When we know all we can learn of a man there is sure to be an area we have never discovered, an immeasurable tract stretching off into the unseen infinity. But, book in hand, the condensed and solid personality made portable for our convenience, we may know its quality and its standing, its depth and its beauty.

Books, again, present us with a measuring-rod. We know only by comparison, and as we gain more and more data for contemplation, we gauge more and more accurately ourselves and our powers and the life to which we stand related. So it is best not to be afraid of many and various books. Too many may cause a little mental indigestion, but we must accustom ourselves to assimilating much if we would be muscular and red-blooded. One of the tests of the mentally unsound is to try the breadth of the field of vision. The man who, with eyes fixed straight ahead, cannot see the object at the side, is the man whose nervous system is unreliable. In mental life, equally, the test is the same. It is the fixed idea, the narrow, limited interest which denotes disease. Wide and broad in-

OUR MEASURING-RODS

terests endow with mental health, courage, and agility, and when for physical reasons it is difficult to broaden our interests by spanning the girth of the world, books furnish us with easy means of transport, with varied climates and temperamental reactions upon climate, and, above all, with various men, nations, and ideals.

I once heard a great man state that any one who had the pluck and the perseverance might become an authority on any given subject. "Just read on that topic from six to ten hours a day, and before you know it you will have mastered it." There is something encouraging and heartening about this for those who are cut off by circumstances from systematic education and guidance. The way may be less easy and less swift, but ultimately we may become master by mere perseverance—a quality any man may beckon to him if he will. Books, indeed, present us with our natural *milieu*. We can move on our own plane of consciousness. It is a vain subterfuge to say that we choose light and trifling literature to divert us after our plunges into profound meditation, and that we enjoy a book because our habitual thoughts are of so much higher tenor. We may, indeed, once or twice in a lifetime, read the work of an elementary intelligence to see what it is like, to add to our data of

THE HUMAN WAY

human knowledge, but if we linger over such books the secret is out. It is because, somewhere or other, lurking hidden within us, is the same trifling and elementary mental habit, but half disenthralled and demanding nourishment. Never dream the law that like will to like can be broken through. We are what we read almost as much as we are what we think. When we express an opinion of a book we label ourselves. The romantic will hunt through books for romance, the historian for statistics and facts, the statesman for policy and methods, the poet for beauty and ideals, and the philosopher for everything. We take from the author mainly the gift of our sleeping selves—some portion of us so quiescent we hardly recognise it till some one of the great band of embodyers brings it up to the rim of consciousness. We draw out a clearer, better-defined outline of our blurred and dim perceptions. After all, even in books, the statement holds true that we receive but what we give. Or at best, we receive what we are fitted to extract.

At any rate, an industrious intercourse with good books helps to lift us above the mere life of convention, whereby we become as lifeless and as objectless as glimmering shadows on a wall. Their appeal is so insistent to the secret and mysterious

LEVELLING DOWN

places of the consciousness, and is so much freer and fuller than any human appeal would dare to be. Books and nature, indeed, can risk calling continually for a sustained attention to the gravity and significance of this chance visit of the soul to mortal spaces.

We run the risk, of course, of translating the higher into a lower atmosphere and misinterpreting. Doubtless no signal can save us here. The tendency to lower is easily seen in the way in which all religions have had to fall from the spiritual plane upon which they were offered to the dogma, ritual, and external forms which people demanded. We should bear in mind that whatever is truly great is never wholly known to us. A lifetime is short in which to reach after the whole meaning of the highest human product; we must continually add to the fulness of our interpretation and deepen our sense of significance by living and growing, if we would stay ourselves at the pitfall and avoid dragging down with us a fragment of a great whole which dwells above us, eternally stable.

Yes; books, with their services, have their dangers, and one of the greatest is that of using books as an opiate—a medicine for drugging ourselves and freeing ourselves of time. Life is pre-eminently our chance for action, and to lie half asleep,

THE HUMAN WAY

amused and diverted from ourselves by the actions and the passions of imaginary men, is to throw life away. Books must be to us a stimulus for more living and more thought, not an anæsthetic to put us to sleep. What we read must be translated into our daily course, into a fuller abundance of significance in the text of reality. An emotion *per se*, beginning and ending with the self, is futile; an emotion translated into action, bodied forth into the visible world as a new power, is calling into play the forces of eternity. To live in fancy alone is to suffer from the disease of Peer Gynt, who, led astray by his own imagination, never reached but one truth outside of himself. To paralyse ourselves with over-deliberation till doubt ties our hands and closes our lips, is to catch the disease of Hamlet and of Amiel, and usually without effecting, as they did, a great legacy to posterity, because they thought and translated feeling into the logical and concrete terms of the word.

If books mean this much of outlet and enlargement to the reader, how much more must they mean to their makers. To clothe one's thought and send it forth to work its will afar from the governing hand, is a strange and a wonderful creative power; and to do so greatly and effectively is granted only to the rarest, most blest among mor-

WISE THROUGH COMPASSION

tals. The half of a phrase of a man of reflection often contains the germ of a whole system of philosophy or the foundation for a theory of conduct. The vital difference between truly great books and the average lies just in this difference of depth of suggestion. Great books are unfathomably suggestive. No one will ever reach to the end of the interpretation of the Gospels, the Upanishads, the Dhamma-Pada, of Epictetus, Plato, Plotinus.

There is a school of literature and of art which urgently advocates experience as a means to consciousness. We are all brought face to face at times with a meagre humanity fed on and upheld by obedience to minor rules, and it is so easy to see the poverty of the merely convention-ridden that we find it difficult to answer the fallacy so speciously presented that urges experience—any and every experience rather than an anæmic consciousness of life. It is just to this question that Wagner replied when he put the power of healing into the hand of him only who is a guileless fool, wise through compassion. There is one kind of man in the world who can dare to be unsophisticated, and that is the man who lives for far issues. Nor is his a narrow experience of life, for with eyes unblinded by desire, such man looks toward the

THE HUMAN WAY

goal of the race; turning from himself he knows the struggles and sufferings of humanity, not by trying them, not by falling down and rising up worn and weakened, but by imagination, by insight and sympathy, and this while he still has the reserve strength to give out and to heal. Such men, whether saints or authors or artists, have a single aim. They try no by-paths, they move straight up, they have the simple-mindedness, the guilelessness, the single purpose of creators. It is the power of genius and of sanctity alike to know by intuition. A certain writer said of Parsifal that his "only achievements were the shooting of a swan and the refusal of a kiss." But the mind sees what the mind brings with it to see. There are those who never reach beyond the gestures of the body, and who might hear the opera a dozen times and yet never know that Parsifal destroyed a whole world of false and lying enticements, that he recovered and liberated a sinning soul, that he healed a lifelong agony, and himself attained through renunciation to the ecstatic vision. It is possible to reduce the highest spiritual victories to the paltriest statement of concrete fact, so closely is all life interwoven. The danger of a meagre humanity lies not in a lack of experience but in a lack of feeling. The recent biographies

THE BOOK AND THE AUTHOR

of Pater show a career markedly lacking in events, and when the life of one of the first geniuses of this era is written, it will probably be found that he was born and grew up in the suburbs of a Flemish town, diligently digging in his garden or sitting in his room writing books. The lives of Charlotte and Emily Brontë seem to have been a round of lowly household tasks, diversified by lonely wanderings over the Yorkshire moors. But shall any one dream that the consciousness of these people was meagre? It is most often out of the depths of the stillness that worthy thoughts flow.

The author, if his book be worth anything at all, is the man who feels a little more, thinks a little deeper than other men, and out of the surplus of consciousness sends forth definite statements. The gift of giving out life is not a casual, slight, and happy turn for using words; it is the power to absorb more life, it is the rich and quick response to any stimuli, till out of the stored abundance new life breaks forth.

Of course, one must take into account that it is part of authorship for the writer to give you his best, his most collected moments. The substance of a man's work doubtless expresses his preoccupations and convictions; but, alas! intention bears often a remote relationship to daily practice, and

THE HUMAN WAY

we are all more or less in the plight of Portia when she said: "I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching." The temperament of high ideals is apt to be tensely strung, and there are extra pitfalls put in the path of intense natures. So when one says that the sum of virtue in a man's work is the same as the sum of virtue in himself—an undeniable truth—there is something much more subtle meant than that he who praises tranquillity possesses his own soul. He may quite sincerely and naturally praise it, because he does not possess his own soul, and thinks how pleasant it would be if he did. Watts, for example, is not a more moral man than Turner because he painted *Faith* and *Hope* and *Love Triumphant*, while Turner painted light and atmosphere. That difference merely means that Watts looked at his universe through the medium of ethical ideals, while Turner interpreted life in terms of architectural line and coloured light. One way is as intrinsically moral as the other. One even wonders a little, sometimes, if that impersonal morality, which is so utterly unpreoccupied with itself, so unconcerned with its own existence and name, and so given over to pure and disinterested contemplation of beauty, is not a degree higher. It is, perhaps, in a way, a little

LIFE'S DEEP SECRETS

flaw to be so righteous-minded as to have virtue ever in mind and on the lips. Leonardo was quite as virtuous a painter as Holman Hunt, though he never labelled a picture nor tagged a moral. But he looked closely and curiously into the nature of things, and there is no taint of meanness, no ignoble smirch upon the strange, subtle, inaccessible, smiling faces he set upon canvas. "You must depict your figures with gestures which will show what the figure has in his mind, otherwise your art will not be praiseworthy. No figure will be admirable if the gesture which expresses the passion of the soul is not visible in it. The most admirable figure is that which best expresses the passion of the mind." Thus Leonardo warns his disciples, and there are spirituality and depth of emotion and strenuous virtue in the caution, although there is no word of right and wrong. A man's direct utterance may belie him, but he communicates himself in every act, in every glance, in despite of himself. He is always, whatever he is doing, communicating himself.

This, after all, is the beauty of life: that its meanings lie deep—deep. We may be obvious platitudinarians, but Life does not unclothe her secrets to a flippant gazer. If we believe in another's virtues it is not because he can utter elo-

THE HUMAN WAY

quent sentences about goodness at all, but because there is something convincing in the lines of his body, in his choice of words, or the cunning with which he shapes his sentence; it is the look in his eyes, the corners of his lips when he smiles, or the confidence he withholds, which inspire our faith. A man may smile and smile and be a villain—meet it is we set it down; he may talk and write about virtue till he is exhausted; he may spend his days extolling disinterested goodness, and yet what he *is* will somehow peep over his shoulder or lurk hidden in his words and contradict him so loudly we can hardly hear his voice. Words will not deceive the close observer of life. A tiny girl of seven, of introspective habit and keen intuitions; who herself had some difficulty in practising geniality, heard a petted *prima donna* much praised because she was not only great in her chosen art, but was also so gracious and so good, and commented: "It isn't that she's so good; it is just that she smiles and pats people. I guess she was *taught* to keep smiling and patting when she was young."

One may have an excellent intellectual conception of what virtue is and not be virtuous; one may even be emotionally obsessed by the idea of righteousness, but to such it is only promised that they

WRITING AND BEING

shall be filled; and, strange contradiction, one may be born brave, honest, faithful, tolerant, and long-suffering, and yet be unable to utter a syllable in honour of the virtues. So, after all, if what an author gives us is the measure of his intellectual power, it is rarely the demonstration of his whole nature. His moral being will, indeed, be in his work, but it is to be found under the words and between the lines in the strength and the patience and the sweetness, or the force and the sincerity and the truth, that wrought the outer garment.

In one of his letters Lewis Nettlehip speaks of understanding why it was that Christ and Socrates wrote nothing. It is true that the greatest personalities have always relied exclusively upon *being* to interpret them to the world rather than upon words. For words in their definite way confine and narrow down personality, which is by its nature fluid and limitless, nor can they ever wholly convey the man who utters them. Even at its highest, art suggests rather than states, and the worth of a poem, a statue, a symphony, is mainly that it may gain new powers and new beauties by the added significance which changing generations of men infuse.

To the author himself his trade must often come to seem what Goethe called it, "a busy idleness";

THE HUMAN WAY

Stevenson laughingly compares it to the trade of *filles-de-joie*, in that it must either please or fail—in fact, address itself to the multitude or drop into the silence. Keats, too, that great apostle of pure beauty, who, beyond other poets, loved the mere sensuous sound of words, had his moments when fame and love “to nothingness do sink.” All the great poets have been moved to indite pæans to Death, and, doubtless, some of the fervour and the eloquence of Browning’s *Prospice*, Whitman’s *Come, Lovely and Soothing Death*, Tennyson’s *Sunset and Evening Star*, and Swinburne’s *Hymn to Proserpine* are due to the weariness and reaction from the trade of multiplying words. Writers have to submit to moments when they are half-paralysed by the haunting sense of the uselessness of utterance, when the only alluring passage seems to lie through the door that leads into the infinite silence. To set partial interpretations and tentative meanings spinning their course through the world; to add noise and bustle and trouble; to multiply words and compress into form the half-glimpses of truth that beset us; to ply with uninspired industry for small returns the trade of setting experience and emotion into words—is, at times, a weary and a disheartening business, and who has once chosen it shall meet, without doubt, his

THE WRITER'S DISCOURAGEMENTS

gloomy hours when the whole matter shall seem but a futile and stupid "busy idleness."

It is, then, that a writer must force himself to play out his cards to the end of the game with all the skill he can muster, whether he be winning or losing. For the author, as for all men, the game of life, the getting the better of destiny, justifies itself by the strength and the skill it educes. His task is, after all, the task of humanity at large: to keep the senses alive and healthy, to keep the perceptions alert and true, to react swiftly and cannily to the stimuli of the outer world, and, above all, to maintain some kind of working harmony between the intellect and the spirit. For, more than other men's, it is his task to keep ever in mind that the intellect unaided cannot tell us the whole story of life, and that the less known powers of the spirit, the intuitions, the faiths, the enthusiasms, have their own justification. A clergyman who had listened to a long argument upon the decay of the churches and their small importance in modern life, responded quietly: "But there will always be some people in the world who need help to say their prayers!" Just as there will always be some people in need of the church's aid and ministration, so the author, in his moments of discouragement, may lay it to heart that there will always be some

THE HUMAN WAY

to lean upon the written word; some to whom books and writing are the main props of loneliness, the means of stimulating thought and increasing consciousness.

Whether or not, as Stevenson says, the writer's case must be judged by his power of pleasing, is an open question. It is a truism that he who writes for his own generation renounces the next. The author of universal appeal is a moon among stars. Tennyson spoke to the thought of his own day and then fell back, while Browning, Swinburne, Meredith, who had appealed to the future, stepped forward into public appreciation. On commencing author, then, this question of conformity or self-confidence must always be faced. People, as a rule, do not read to learn new thoughts, but to find their own prepossessions and tastes confirmed. To every young writer there comes the temptation to fall in with prevailing views and to keep silence when he cannot, but this is to win a cheap and easy success. And though to fight for one's own point of view means to be haunted every now and then with the awful question of the worth or worthlessness of an individual standpoint, one must still face the music and refuse to be a straggler on the march.

An author's value depends largely upon his in-

THE WRITER'S RENUNCIATIONS

dependence of spirit and his power to think ahead of other men. He must either possess the power to live alone among men, or he must actually, physically, dwell apart. He must live bounded by the two great silences—the silent and hidden processes of nature on the one hand, and the inexorable and inscrutable reserve of the Beyond on the other. For the life of an author demands great power of self-sustainment, and not only must the physical senses be sharpened and kept alert to all the phenomena of nature, but that other side of man's being which moves in the vast spaces of the intangible and the immeasurable must be exercised and kept imaginatively alert.

When we have developed philosopher farmers like Levin in *Anna Karénina* we shall have more poets and more great writers; for certainly such a life offers the strongest enticement to the imaginations of poets and philosophers. The riot of delicate colour in the early spring, and the gradual revival of nature's vocal life, the sense of expectancy in the stretch of February hills when the whole landscape might be sketched in sepia and white, the shut-in season of the winter when the world is asleep and the householder may send his own thoughts far afield into the ages and the distances, the slow, soundless, uninterrupted flow of

THE HUMAN WAY

hours wherein to read and think, the dropping veil of twilight through long, sleepy afternoons, the chant of frogs and locusts after dark, the steady drip of autumnal rains and the blazing death and fall of the leaves—all these are the natural heritage of the man of thought. It was such a life that Montaigne led on the little estate that bears his name in the province of Périgord. He boasted that, though he lived through the most troublous and warlike times in the history of France, and his house was open at all times to all parties, such was the candour of his life and the peaceableness of his pursuits, that he remained throughout unmolested and unsuspected.

It may seem strange to say that in an age generally looked upon as commercial, bustling, noisy, the spirit of the times is voiced most definitely in a literature of acquiescence, of reflection and quiet. There is nothing new under the sun, and there has never been an age since the beginning of writing that has not produced books of this same order, but never before have such books been so numerous, so widely read, so influential. It would almost seem as if the bustle, the noise, the greed, the haste, the competition, were justified by the beauty of the body of admonition they have called forth.

A generation or so earlier the tone of censure was

HUMAN SOLIDARITY

entirely different: rebuke was more petulant and vehement and less hopeful. One has but to compare the utterances of Carlyle and Ruskin with those of Maeterlinck and the modern mystics to note the introduction of patience and hopefulness in the counsels of perfection. The new tone is not that of the patronising master, as of one who should say: "I, indeed, have conquered life—listen while I explain it all, and learn of me how to act your part"; it is, rather, an admission of the solidarity of life, of the unity of souls. The whole illusion of separateness means pain, and only as we rid ourselves of it do we approach virtue and happiness. We suffer, indeed, not because some one outside ourselves inflicts suffering, but because the habit of our thought involves suffering. But the writers who teach this doctrine no longer reach down from a height of perfection to us; they say: "I am even as you; share with me all I have known"; but if, by chance, they voice the truest spirit of the age, they say: "*I am* you; let us acknowledge this, and share our consciousness."

"All men, even the saints," says a modern mystic, "are interested in their own affairs; so the right and wrong of it come to be matters of the scope of self, the reach of self, the depth and breadth and height of self's affairs. 'Which now

THE HUMAN WAY

was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?' I have grown to be neighbour and to have the neighbourly heart toward him only over whom I have learned to stretch my shield of ownership, and to make real and living for me with the warmth of interest I feel in that which I call *mine*; to other men I am cold; they are theirs and somebody's, they are not mine." It is the spirit of our age to feel that neighbourliness must stretch as far as the whole girth of the world, and that all mankind is not only *mine* but *me*. Whitman, perhaps, carried this feeling further than any other, and with him it was less, too, an intellectual conviction than an innate perception. He felt it; with strange, mysterious thrills he felt his bondage to all men—to men past and men to be:

"It avails not, neither time nor place—distance avails not—

I am with you, you men and women of a generation or ever so many generations hence;

I project myself—also I return—I am with you and know how it is.

I, too, felt the curious, abrupt questionings stir within me."

That seems to be the human discovery beginning to voice itself here and there in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and singing itself aloud

A NEW FORM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

from the whole choir in the new century—the song of the identity of human experience, the solidarity of the human soul. There are, too, signs that the different kind of consciousness is like to bring forth new forms of art. Metrical and rhymed language can hardly pass beyond the point of suppleness and intricacy attained by Mr. Swinburne. But there may be a new form, less regular, less confined by rules, more free of utterance, richer, more suited to the complexity of modern thought, which shall tally somewhat with the changes taking place in modern music, where, slowly but surely, the diatonic harmony is being laid aside for a hyperchromatic basis of composition—the so-called *genre omnitonique*.

In speaking of new forms of consciousness, one is taking, perhaps, too optimistic a stand; yet it is certain that supreme genius cannot be totally unrelated to the humanity of which it is but an advance-guard. If, figuratively speaking, the genius stands on the shoulders of humanity and interprets life from the wider vision given by that height, that is all one can expect of him. Soaring into the air, he must, by nature's laws of gravity, fall. He is bound to keep up some sort of relation to his kind. Shelley, insisting upon living as though all men were already angels, lost hold upon the prac-

THE HUMAN WAY

tical moral order leading toward an earthly paradise. It is impossible to bound back into the Garden of Eden. It no longer lies in the valley behind, but has been translated into a richer, a fuller, a more inconceivably beautiful heaven, to which we climb along the rugged mountain-side of deeper consciousness and deeper renunciations. It is possible, then, that all the modern multiplication of comforts, all the mechanical devices for making the physical life easy and negligible, is just that moment in progress when humanity is standing level, preparatory to a great united movement upward. Once on the higher step, we shall lift our greatest man on our shoulders again and hear a truth from him that reaches farther out into the starry spheres of the spiritual life than any we have had heretofore. For the genius is but the culminating flower of humanity, and he comes to the birth where for many generations quiet virtue and striving intelligence have been at work.

A great point to keep at heart is that all our present-day multiplication of mechanical comfort loses its meaning when it is used to complicate the physical life and draw our attention off to physical enjoyments, whereas its value may be incalculable if it so simplifies and diminishes the necessary at-

LIFE MORE THAN BOOKS

tention to physical needs as to leave the mind more and more free for spiritual pursuits. It is difficult to conceive of creation as other than the struggles of spiritual beings to come to higher and fuller consciousness. And this unity of human endeavour the writer of to-day needs to hold very close at heart, for it is being ever more and more emphatically stated. Indeed, in its various forms, it seems the great affirmation of our present century toward which the past has steadily worked, that divisions are stupid and negligible misconceptions; that progress is one movement of all humanity, not the separate jaunt of a sect or a party; that we are, in very fact, our brother's keeper, and that his sins are never so many or so great that we can cease to be responsible for them; that the evil in the world is, to the end, our evil, belonging to us as we belong to it. This feeling of the affinity in all things the writer of to-day must grasp if he would stand away from the two worst enemies of life and literature—vulgarity and mean-spiritedness. There is an uplifting solemnity, too, in the least task of so great a work as the unification of human endeavour, so that to "sweep a room as for thy laws" may partake of sublimity.

"Social justice as the controlling force in the development of political institutions, social effi-

THE HUMAN WAY

ciency as the goal of education, universal sympathy with life as the guiding principle of literature and art—this is a triad of uplifting motives which cannot help stimulating every constructive energy,” writes a modern philosopher. To apprehend this current in the world’s thought is a task not to be overlooked by a writer of to-day; nor can he afford to forget, through timidity or self-depreciation, that however small his task, he, too, is in “the proud and calm procession of eternal things.”

It is a great story, this story of life, and full of hard and deep meanings, and never dull so long as we keep up our questioning. For the answers of life are full of contradictions, and its pain is often joy, and its curses blessing, and its blackest night the sun, and its greatest event the stillness, and each man to live must be his own slayer. Life never shows us any trite little tale we can read straight off and forget—a tale with a nice obvious conclusion, with the good folk all dressed in white and listening to wedding-bells and the bad folk all ugly and dark and sent off into corners for weeping and gnashing of teeth. That is the little fiction we tell each other because it’s as high as our intelligence has climbed, to like to label things and pretend we know something conclusive. But the purpose of life is evidently not

LIFE'S PURPOSES

to amuse or divert us; it is not easy, not obvious, not even pleasant in the ordinary acceptation of the term. It would seem to have in hand the making of us into something utterly different from what we now are; it would seem to be teaching us that all things are enchained and intertwined and indissolubly bound together, and with the smile of the Sphinx, Life looks at us and dazzles us, and with the claws of the Sphinx she grips into us and warns us against making facile answers to her riddles.

II

OUT-OF-DOORS

THE world is large in proportion as we enter it with a capacity for emotion. Few kinds of feeling return so rich a reward as a highly cultivated love of appearances. The first impulse of civilisation is to beautify. When primitive man established himself in a cave and finished making stone knives and hatchets for self-protection, the first-fruits of his leisure were the drawings on the walls of the cave. He demanded beauty in his surroundings. It is to-day the mark of progress from the pure savage that a man becomes attentive to the decorations of his life, and a keen perception and a skilled practice in this matter of seeing is one of the most powerful means to the extension of the personality. Desire limits—it is a process of dragging what one wants into one's self; but love and perception extend—these push out the barriers of the self and endow with elasticity and power of wide reach.

THE WORLD OF PERCEPTION

Touch and taste unaided by the imagination remain imprisoned in the sphere of the body. Smell, despite its priority in associational value and its stimulative effect upon the imagination, has a limited reach, but vision and hearing extend indefinitely beyond the body. The joys of seeing and hearing—these lift us out of ourselves and intensify our relation to the visible universe in all its vast extension and its unplummetted depths. To stretch the realms in which we see and hear is no childish impulse; indeed, the love of the beauty in the world, the power of seeing it, the impersonal joy it gives, is apt to come to a man when the life of desire is failing. The personal life of need and greed blinds; it limits the vision to the thing we hope to get; but let a man grow beyond his wants and a new and wonderful universe is spread out before him.

Since beauty is the sensation in us of a pure and disinterested delight regarded as the quality of an external object, the more we dwell in such sensations, the more will they grow in keenness, quickness, and intensity; the eye will perceive more and more of delicate shades of beauty, become more and more alert to line and colour, and the ear will awake to the vaguer waverings and vibrations in the air. And even as morality the sense of power

THE HUMAN WAY

in obedience is a contribution to the worth of life, so the cultivated perceptions make their own valuable contribution to the charm and dignity of existence.

It is a strange sensation to cross the sand-dunes at night with an average workman and realise that his entire self is concentrated on bad walking, the approaching fall of night, and the desire for comfortable shelter, while to the observer these are all the merest side-issues, hardly apparent, and every sense is aroused to delight. Nature is calling into play the whole being at once. We feel the great wash of the scented air, blown clean across sea spaces, slapping against our skin; we taste the salt in our pores, and we smell, rising up with the dark from the pale stretch of dune or purple patches of furze, the odour of the earth; the silence, punctuated by distant sounds, delicate and faint, claims the ear; through its pulsing we catch the mournful lapping of the sea, the faint whispering of the evening breeze preparing to blow, the far-away chorus of the frogs. An inlet of the ocean spreads to one side a little space of water, very still, yet glistening somewhat in the dusk. The sky, deep and dark and infinitely far overhead, blends toward the horizon with a glow of pale primrose, shot up on the trail of a setting

ACROSS THE SAND-DUNES

sun, and against this splash of pallor the deep green pines toss their tufted tops. The planet Venus appears on the edge between the light of the western slope and the depth of the central cone, and mirrors herself brokenly in the rippled waters, and the trunks of a few scattered pines along the farther beach draw black lines somewhat uncertain in the mirror. Just to be alive for such a moment is a joy beyond speech. It bears no relation to any gratified desire whatsoever. It is the straining of the self beyond its limits, and we cease to want, to demand, to suffer; we know an absolutely impersonal joy, unruffled and unalloyed as the existence of tree, rock or mountain or freshly blossoming flower, and yet more full of content because more deeply alive, more keenly aware. The boy who stood in the copse each spring morning at the break of dawn to hear a mocking-bird trill, as it fluttered up from its bush and down again, was laying aside a capacity for joy in living which no sorrow could quench, no deprivation deaden. The perception of beauty is a spiritual and a creative act, and who translates such perception into the medium of the spoken or the written word puts his shoulder against the world's burden and helps to shove it aside and widen the area of gladness.

THE HUMAN WAY

The Poet, more than all others, has demanded entrance to the Temple of Beauty—has claimed the right to dwell there. Indeed, it is difficult sometimes to know whether we love scenery because it reminds us of poetry, or poetry because it reminds us of scenery. It is certain that one of the chief charms of literature is its power of evoking memories of landscape. The poets, gathering up the dust of fleeting impressions, re-create the earth and cover it with a vivifying garment of thought, putting order and exactitude into our vague and chaotic impressions, and enhancing beauty by fitting it to noble sounds. They give us:

“A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky.”

No detail is too trivial for them to note and deck with beauty; the thick-leaved oak, the tender dove in firry woodlands, the ragged rims of thunder brooding low with shadow-streaks of rain, the long and pleasant grass, the tufted plover piping along the fallow lea, are a part of the zest in living.

Their feeling for beauty carries with it not only spiritual promise and meaning, but purification,

HEALTH AND PURIFICATION

as does any form of extension of the self. All reverence and admiration have in them the reactive blessedness of formal worship, and are, in themselves and in their power of exaltation and lifting above the level of sin and death, of the essence of true religion. In the wonderful death scene of Socrates, when his disciples turned to him and asked him what they could do to serve him, he replied: "Take care of yourselves; by so doing ye shall best serve me and mine." Perhaps the truth is too easily lost sight of that by keeping our finer pleasures alive and alert we best serve the world.

To see a countenance lit by innocent delight and lively health is a joy and benefit, and few things so conduce to these spiritual expressions as the simple habit of living close to the forces of which we are a product. There is a part of each year when we should all go out and camp. He knows this of a certainty who, year by year, has tried it and found it good. But experience makes perfect; and after several trials a man knows that camping with a party is a futile and stupid experience, and not unlike camping in evening clothes or near a town. If, for any frailty, physical, mental or moral, one cannot camp alone—"mutterseelen allein," as the Germans emphati-

THE HUMAN WAY

cally and quaintly phrase it—then one should take a boy and a dog along; for they have a way of absenting themselves—tramping, exploring, swimming, fishing, or hunting—all day, and only turn up hungry and sleepy after sunset. Also, it is futile to camp if one is dependent upon three meals a day. Air and water are excellent nourishment, and a meal after tidying up camp in the middle of the morning and another after sunset with the dog and boy are all-sufficient to a hardy camper. Real camping requires at least five miles of surrounding silence and loneliness and a good spring of water, and then one's shelter matters little. A tent or a deserted log-cabin and a little help in the beginning at installing the woodpile and building a fireplace, suffice for all the needs of a man through August. To have a tent near that last forlorn refuge of the dull and the vacant, the summer hotel, is no camping at all, for the whole object of the expedition is to be thrown back once more upon one's own resources, and find out what civilisation and education and comforts have done for one. One has then a fair chance of measuring how much company one's thoughts and perceptions unaided can furnish.

Perhaps the ideal camping lodge is an old deserted cabin with a rustic bench on either side the

CAMPING

door and a flowing stream with a good stone-lined pool not too far distant. To sit on one's front settle and look out upon miles of stretching meadow, hill and wood, gives one a lord-of-the-manor sensation which the most complex of mansions with its serving-folk and difficult organisation cannot bestow. Here is our leisure to enjoy and contemplate unbroken and unimpaired.

“We plough the very skies, as well
As earth; the spacious seas
Are ours; the stars all gems excel.
The air was made to please
The souls of men; devouring fire
Doth feed and quicken man's desire.
The sun itself doth in its glory shine
And gold and silver out of very mire,
And pearls and rubies out of earth refine;
While herbs and flowers aspire
To touch and make our feet divine.
How glorious is man's fate!
The laws of God, the works He did create,
His ancient ways, are His and my estate.”

One's bedroom should be all out-of-doors,—be chosen not too far from the woodshed to pull one's cot or mattress in and out. For a bed is an ungainly piece of furniture in the daytime and should be hustled out of sight, and yet at night perfect contemplation requires springs and sheets.

THE HUMAN WAY

Complete repose steals over him, however, who, lying in comfort a cot's height above the creeping ants and lizards, sees a wavering carpet about him of tall, gray grasses, thickly studded with daisies and harebells. The hillsides and overtopping mountains that form the distant circular walls blend in colour with the inwrought harebells, and shade from azure into misty purple, and all night the ceiling shifts. The clouds are wavering draperies fanned across the stars. Charles's Wain and Cassiopeia chassée around Polaris; Vega, blue and steely, dominates at first the highest arch of the sky; and if over the eastern hills one notes a strange and splendid white glow, it means that in the course of an hour the broad face of the moon will peep over, laughing at the joke. He is a lucky camper who can keep awake, watching the scenery all night. Somehow, even with the best intents to see it all, the hours slip out of sight, the keen air blows us over into unconsciousness, and the glow of dawning awakens us.

Straightway the path of the sun points out the swimming-pool, and then one begins to fetch water, to inspect the woodpile, to turn over one's stores. One whistles with the boy and scampers with the dog, and sweeps and orders and sets the day along to motion.

THE DAY LONG

When the sun has ridden past the meridian, however, it is quite as natural to lie on one's back and inspect the depth of azure above and the sailing of those heaped-up, cotton-wool clouds that litter the blue floor of the sky with shreds and patches. The young camper may want to do things all day, but the beauty of many camping days is that one has learned to lie still on one's back all the long, lazy, declining afternoon, just staring at the shadows as they begin to slant, and the colours as they brighten along the horizon line. Nor must one ever regret the slow, still hours of a day when a uniform gray stretches from curve to curve of the horizon, and the rain falls steadily, unaggressively, unbrokenly through lagging time. One can heap the cushions on the settle, under the slanting roof of the doorway, and, with a raincoat thrown over one, keep still. The stiller one is, the more passive and patient one becomes, the better; and only a stupid man would look about distrustfully for useful thoughts. The thoughts that chance along the way, bowing themselves courteously through the consciousness, are much more like to be worth our hospitality than those we have chased and harried till they are worn out. And then, when one is very, very still, one begins to hear the steady swish of the rain as it falls through

THE HUMAN WAY

the air and its gentle tapping on the sodden ground. In a stillness such as this all kinds of sounds become perceptible. Far off in the woods one hears the intermittent, subdued chatter of the birds. They do not sing, but occasionally they exchange a few remarks about the prospects of the weather. Now and then a bird's shrill cry breaks forth, intense and scolding—doubtless some mother-bird telling her restless young not to run out in the wet and get their feathers damp. Occasionally, too, the quiet, steady sounds are interrupted by some insect's shrilling. What about? Who knows? In such a lazy mood one can speculate for hours what the insect wanted, why it burst suddenly into audible eloquence and as suddenly stopped. Was the outburst effective? Was it indignation—a call upon the gods to right an evil world, or just a glorifying hymn of praise? And such long day, drawn to its close, need waken no reproachful thoughts of idleness. What better thing can we do for our Creator than stop to love and admire His handiwork?

Perhaps the finest days are those when the air is heavy and inert, after the rain is over, and clouds are gray and hang hardly an arm's-length over the hilltops. Such a day presses all the colour out of the earth; the brown and olive tones stand out

THE WORLD A-FOOT

in the woods, and below the yellow grasses one sees an inch or two of vivid, sodden green, and the stems of the white birches stand out and flaunt themselves before the eyes like ladies at a garden-party. The stones are a wet, slippery gray, and one gets the odd sensation of light coming forth from the earth and rising toward the sky, the exactly contrary experience of watching, as evening falls, the darkness rising from the clefts in the furrows of the earth, slowly spreading and enwrapping the woods and invading the sky.

It is never worth while to waste our years without a few glad weeks of camping. For neither wealth, nor love, nor fame, nor achievement can repay us for the loss of those lazy hours when we might have lain prone beneath a beneficent heaven, staring at the clouds, peering through long grasses, watching the checkered sunlight break into the woods, or reviewing at night the marshalling of the heavenly forces.

Rightly to know the by-paths as well as the dusty highroads, to count the wild flowers and listen to the birds' notes, to remember just what kinds of pine and birch grow, and where to expect the maple, oak, and elm, the choke-cherry and the rowan-tree, one must travel through the country afoot. To peep through the window at a gurgling

THE HUMAN WAY

brook is one thing, but to follow it along until the feet ache and burn, and then to sit and dabble them in it until one starts up renewed and refreshed for the home run, is another and a far more memorable experience. There is an unforgettable intimacy established with such a brook and its song; its stones, its miniature falls, and soft, grassy places are a part of our mental life in seasons of dryness and under wintry skies. To travel afoot is to know the abundant joy of racing blood setting the body all a-tingle, and to get acquainted with the folk in the villages and along the highway. To know men, met at haphazard down the road, lifts the mind from narrow provincialism of class and sectional distinctions. Perhaps we have been inclined to pity the poor and to be morbidly anxious to relieve them from a situation so devoid of accessories. To walk the road and ask the hospitality of the chance comer is a lesson in the equalisation of happiness.

A hale old man of sixty, travelling with an equally hale old woman in a wagon containing their whole cooking apparatus and a tent for the night lodging, gladly shared a meal of corn-bread, buttermilk, and Irish potatoes roasted in the ashes of a little bonfire, while they expatiated on the delights of a nomadic life in terms fit for Juggling

JUGGLING JERRY

Jerry. A blacksmith by trade, he said he was, but he handed over the business to apprentices while all the summer long he and his wife drove through the land, pitching their tent by night and sleeping on balsam boughs with the flaps of the tent thrown open to the stars. It took no longer than ten minutes to picket the horses and pitch the tent when they found a grassy spot and a spring toward evening. It was a cheap way of living, for it cost every bit of thirty dollars a month to run their establishment at home, whereas, living in the open, they reduced the sum to eighteen or twenty a month without any privations. Moreover, he looked for horse-trades along the way and often turned a pretty penny, and he lent out his cow to his poorer neighbours while he was gone; and charity like that counted to one's credit side in the Beyond. Then the Beyond, once mentioned, loomed bigger, and he continued: "There is folks as don't believe in enjoyin' yer life while yer got it. But I do. Why, what did our Saviour say on earth? He said: 'You eat, drink, and be merry; to-morrow you may die.'" He was an astute citizen, that blacksmith, and he felt the seal of approval upon his whole career.

But there are other than human intimacies to be cultivated by the wayfarer. Who that travels

THE HUMAN WAY

in train or conveyances knows the birds' nests, or sees young thrushes getting the first lessons in flying, as does he who falls asleep by a mossy stone and slowly opens his eyes to hear the scolding of a mother thrush, and to see four small, downy babies, gaping perilously on a twig and listening to counsels of perfection for birds. It is the foot-traveller only who counts sixty different kinds of wild flowers in as many miles' stretch, and who hears the vesper sparrow sing at sunset. There is, too, all the glory of independence to be counted in. To feel one's own completeness one need only travel fifteen to twenty miles a day for a week and find out how difficult it is to get rid of five dollars in that time, to know the insistent camaraderie and good-fellowship of the road to those on foot. Whether it's the real glory of being mistaken for a veritable tramp or whether

"The market girls and fishermen
The soldiers and the sailors too,"

simply like to flaunt the light-hearted gayety of their lives in the faces of those habitually deprived, it would be difficult to decide, but nowhere else in the world is there such hospitality and kindness, such trustful cordiality and con-

NATURE'S LIMITATIONS

fidence, as greets the footsore and weary when he unbuckles his pack and makes a halt in his tramp.

There is, of course, a limit to this complete understanding of nature, and our at-one-ment with all created earth may easily be snapped. It requires only one good day's march from home or from any shelter, a sudden darkening of the sky, and the fond Mother Nature, so infinitely and variously beautiful, is converted into a hostile force—alien, harsh, destructive. One realises then that if a man has carried civilisation too far and has swamped himself in his belongings, he has at least done so in a natural self-defence. If one is inclined to feel rather contemptuous of the big athlete who confessed that it took just half a man's waking hours to keep his body in order, one is yet brought to feel that there is a happy medium between savagery and the Waldorf. To wander forth in the gray of dawn, to go on and on until eighteen miles from home—one's own or any one else's—to sit down at the end of a mountain gorge with sheer gray cliffs rising steep on either side and a wide, frothing stream gushing in between, with an imperfectly blazed trail behind as the only guide to a distant shelter, and to watch a storm break, awakens the conviction that the world is not really so much one's own as one had dreamed in the sunlit

THE HUMAN WAY

morning. The breeze which fanned us then freezes us now; the heavens blacken and glower malignantly; a deep, prolonged grumbling as of wild beasts after prey begins in the distance; sudden flashes of light throw out the cliffs and forests in lurid grotesque wise; and all these are far from native and home-like phenomena; man becomes conscious that creation exists for some more unfathomable purpose than to add to his joy in living.

How innocent and round and shiny the moon looks, peeping over the eastern tips of the mountains when the earth has laid aside her evil mood. It is not so easy for a chance wayfarer, wrapped in borrowed blankets with wet and steaming clothes pressed close to his burning skin, to forget. He is apt to drive homeward a chastened and a saddened spirit. Yes, Nature can deceive. Wilful, feminine, and capricious, she smiles to trap him into a presumptuous fondness, the better to flout him. The wayfarer remembers a certain friend who, taken suddenly ill at a far-away mountain house, exclaimed, weakly: "I don't mind dying, but I want to die where I can buy cologne and have the frills on my night-shirt fluted!" The wayfarer who once felt only scorn for such yearnings is apt to be converted. His heart will ever after fail him when he threatens to elope with a blanket

SUPERFLUITIES

and a book to a mountain-top and live alone till the winter snows drive him down. He realises that civilised man has given his heart and his peace to tubs of hot water, laundered clothes, scented soaps, bath-towels, cooked food, open fires, and softly-tinted walls.

A lady, who was also a philanthropist, crossed the Russian frontiers to visit Tolstoï and, ushered into the presence of the great saint, she uttered the usual conventional greetings and exclamations, while the sage eyed her abstractedly and silently. "As if," she said—"as if he were quietly turning back the top of my head and looking at the thoughts inside." When she ceased speaking, he touched her large and, at the time, fashionable sleeve, and said, sweetly: "Why do you wrap so much cloth on your arms? If you ripped it off it would make a nice frock for a little girl." The great difficulty, then, is to draw the line at sufficiency. Man thrown loose upon the caprices of nature is not man at his best; man spending half his waking hours upon the care of his body, is not man at his best. Wherever protection and necessary care are converted into luxury and superfluity, he is weakened. But doubtless time will renew the bond between man and Nature, drawing him ever closer to her, teaching him to extract

THE HUMAN WAY

health and peace and patience from her and to thwart her caprices by his ingenuity. To live confined by artificial limits the year round, is to let civilisation wreak great vengeance upon us, dulling our senses, weakening our bodies. There is a constant need to renew the bond to nature, to come again into our natural heritage of the earth, so that the whole girth of the world may be our playground and the material of our joy.

As for the real sensation of deserving the chaplet of the sage, the average mortal is most like to win it when he spends long, idle, rambling days in the spring woods; for, just at this time of the year, they are wrought with miracles of delicacy and intricacy and beauty beyond speech.

Every place in the world has its own time for perfection. One can never echo quite whole-heartedly Browning's—

“Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there!”

Not that England has not perennial charm; but why not be there in June, while one's about it, when the cold and the drizzling grayness are once and for all folded up and laid on the shelf, and when the larks wheel, circling, singing over every field, dropping their “silver chain of sound”; when all the wild flowers of Milton's *Lycidas* and

THE SPRING WOODS

Arnold's *Thyrsis* and Shelley's *Question* are trailing and blooming and bedecking the whole face of the earth, and when every wind that blows is faint with the fumes of sunlight and of earth? Every one who is attentive to the real business of life, the catching at all the stray ends of beauty and heaping them in a treasure-trove of memory, knows that the proper time to see Normandy, Brittany, and the New England hills is September, when a little forecasting tinge of frost is in the air, glinting white over the meadows in the early morning, just by way of adding glitter to the flashing pageant of the autumn leaves. But if one owned the magic carpet, as truly all human beings should, one would sit down upon it just about the tenth of April every year, and give the order, "To the Southern woods." Probably it would be better to leave the carpet by the roadside, near some old historic town, and walk—for it would be a pity to miss the mile-long hedges of golden broom flinging their wild arms over the straggling white road that runs

"Like a lane out of heaven that leads through a dream,"

a sight equal in its glory to Wordsworth's "host of golden daffodils." How the words bring the

THE HUMAN WAY

picture to the mind! He must have made a sudden turning and come upon them quite by surprise—a whole field of molten gold, ten thousand daffodils waving in the wind. What wonder that Shelley, falling upon a like experience, should have swooned away with sheer delight of the vision, since he was so slightly bound down to earth that emotion invariably loosened the frail tie. Whoever has driven up a certain bare rise of land and overlooked a tiny, worn-old, but once historic-proud village in Virginia has seen a sight not less overwhelming in its glory—miles upon miles of the golden broom hedges.

And then one penetrates from the roadside into the softened and checkered light of the woods. The trees at this time of the year combine the beauties of both winter and summer; they are still partially bare to the blue sky, letting through wonderful lace-like traceries, and yet the tender green bespeaks the fuller shade that shall come when the sun has worked himself up to his full midsummer fervour. The long-needled pines hung with brown cones overtop the other trees, their great straight, aspiring stems drawing lines in the wilderness, and below them the low-growing, wide-spreading dogwood raises its layers of pure white blossoms, like an unexpected shower of baby moons caught on the

NOONTIDE AND SUNSET

branches and held; and in between, for sheer luxuriance and supererogation, the red-bud and the Judas-tree add their flash of colours. Lower still there are wild knotted tangles of coral honeysuckle and yellow jasmine clinging to the holly-trees, and still lower the wild azalea blooms, pink and white in her glossy leaves. Just peeping above the dead leaves rise the pink lady's-slipper, green jacks-in-the-pulpit, serious, straight, and comical withal, and everywhere sweet-scented bracken. As one nears the edge of the wood, what more natural than a wide stretch of the red columbines, hanging jewel-like above their large and tender trefoils?

The noon hour should be spent deep in the woods and among the tree-tops. One need not climb, but, lying flat on one's back, one sees all the affairs half-way between earth and heaven. A bald-headed mother eagle may be scolding her three awkward young ones in the nest and spurring them on to make an effort to fly. There is much encouragement to be derived from seeing an eaglet wavering on the branch, flapping his wings and afraid to trust himself in the air, and then, finally, soaring off so easily and comfortably. And there, in the noonday stillness, with the sun throwing fantastic shapes of light upon the ground, out

THE HUMAN WAY

of the quiet and the silence the little furtive wood-noises penetrate—the tapping of the woodpecker, the squirrel's chirp, the whiz of wing as the humming-birds fly past, and the drone and buzz of insects. No birds sing just at this hour; but blue and scarlet and cardinal colour, olive and gray and brown, the little specks of melodious life flit past us, bent, doubtless, too, upon the hoarding of beauty after their kind.

The hours move slower in the afternoon. Before the great catastrophe of sunset there is a pause, a retard of the action of the daily pageant. The slant rays of the sun linger lazily among the briers and the bushes; a golden and russet haze glows over all the woodland greenery. The day is growing grave and reverend, slow of movement and majestic. The colour in the woods fades, and a purplish-brown mist, called darkness, begins to rise from the breast of the earth. Then to the edge of the wood for a sight of the open sky, where the lord of the world is sinking, drawing after him the great wing-shaped, roseate-hued clouds! Pale lines of primrose yellow, slashes of green and lilac and purple, lie back of the flaming clouds:

“Look now where Colour, the soul's bridegroom, makes
The house of heaven splendid for the bride.”

AUTUMNAL THOUGHTS

With the flowering of heaven colour dies out; the earth takes on a pale and ashen hue; nun-robed the evening comes as the day dies and the woods fade.

A very different feeling comes over us viewing the self-same woods in autumn; as the mind broods on the aspects of the scenes, the sympathetic analogies between the natural processes and human life force themselves upon our attention. It was Villon who wrote it long ago:

“Where are the snows of yester-year?”

And long before Villon, and since ever history began, men have stood marvelling, as we stand, at this vision of time trickling away like the wind not caught in a net—all life, all existence, all seemingly solid forms as fluid as the moments, the hours, the seasons. Nothing remains; no mood is stable; change alone is changeless.

“What is the world’s delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.”

Pleasure and pain, hopes and fears, seize us in turn; and just as we grow to know them, perhaps to cling to them, yearning to call some one thing ours, they pass by and become, too, a figment and

THE HUMAN WAY

a dream. So in the autumn weather more than other times we face the flux of things, when on all sides the green below and blue above are transformed to an earth all gold and russet, set in a skyey framework of chill, wan gray. The eyes of time are turned backward,

“And spectral seem the winter-boding trees,
The ruinous bowers and drifted foliage wet,”

the baring branches make intricate tracteries against the wan sky, and the dying warmth of summer and faint heralding of frost mingle together in the air. This is the year's twilight, the moment when rest and reflection set in, the hour when we invite those coherent, waking dreams that shadow forth but faintly the fantastic, ill-assembled images of night. It is the season which tallies with a man's years from fifty to sixty, with a woman's from forty to fifty—the moment when at last the thick of the fight with alien forces is past, when the basis of the structure of life is builded for better or worse, and we yield ourselves up to a systematic setting of our house of thought in order, to a revision of our set of values; we fling aside all superfluities and face the slow stripping of life in view of the long journey just ahead of us into the dim unknown. And this little foothold

THE TWILIT YEARS

at the parting of the ways, this moment of fullest maturity and impinging decay, is in life, as in the year, the point of most enchanting beauty, of most poignant charm—the season when reflection and peace usurp the effort and hustle of mid-life, when the personal horizon is slowly lifting, and we get wider and longer vistas into the unknown, the season when the bitterness of loss is somewhat stilled,

“In the hushed mind’s mysterious far-away
Doubtful what ghostly thing will steal the last
Into that distance, gray upon the gray.”

Spring is the season of fresh endeavour and young impulse; summer is the time for the ripening, enlarging, maturing of all projects; and then, lest man should for an instant fancy himself stable upon the earth, should picture this earthly life as ultimate, Autumn, the “metaphor of everything that dies,” comes in, counting the falling petals on her rosary, setting the clouds of birds into flight, letting her earth wither or ever she shrouds her, putting the seal of the passing of all mortal things upon the face of life. Then we realise that we, too, are ebbing out with the dying year. If man forces action in youth, it is in the high-hearted hope of seeing the results; but in our autumn years we force action, knowing that the little we do must be

THE HUMAN WAY

swiftly done; our years are few, our hopes are brittle; we have learned to expect little or no return; we have come to the age when we are—

“Not panting after growing beauties; so
We shall ebb out with those who homeward go.”

If we have lived naturally, taking the joys and fighting the sorrows of the years as they rolled, there is a genial temper in the autumn weather. Silence and peace and dreams draw over us unawares, and we start up to wonder where all the tumults of yesterday are flown. Grief and suffering leave little in the memory, but joy stays there. “Joy is the name of a passion in which the mind passes to a greater perfection and power,” said one, anticipating Spinoza, and grief we see often as the material of joy in process of slow transformation.

There is another crown on the autumnal years: the detachment of which we have thought, for which we have striven all through the spring and summer of our lives, is with us, we know not how nor whence. We are ready, without urging, to fold our hands a little and look on. We are glad to lay aside the vestment of the personal life, with all its desires and hopes and ambitions, and to drift, even as Nature herself is drifting, into the ultimate cold and quiet which precede new birth.

SOUNDS

If we brood on the natural aspects of life, so also do we note the natural forces, being, indeed, the products of them and bound up with them in the general law of existence. Our superior organisation can at least be shown in wilfully turning them into sources of pleasure and making them serve and delight us. There would seem to be no sort of doubt in the mind of any attentive observer of life that sounds can conquer passion, inspire courage, create hope, and work various other wonders in the mind and heart. To go to sleep to the drip of rain-drops on a tin roof is as soothing, as tenderly quieting an experience as to come unexpectedly from the glare and bustle of the day into a twilit room, where a harp is softly giving out arpeggios or where a sweet-toned piano is singing that little prelude in D-flat major of Chopin, the reiterated dropping upon A-flat and the occasional step up to B-flat and back exactly imitating the insistent song of the rain when it falls upon metal. Let a man who has a tendency to nurse wrath or brood over grief listen on every possible occasion to such a rain-song, and he will find his grief becoming involuntarily acquiescent, and his anger will seem out of keeping. The steady, low melody, broken only here and there by a louder splash, is so full of the inevitable necessity of things as they

THE HUMAN WAY

are, and the personal passions wane so before inexorable insistence.

Quite different and of varying import is the sound of the rain-drops heard as they fall upon sodden earth and decaying leaves in the February woods. The song breathes mystery and merriment. To take shelter under a heavy-branching tree and hold one's breath while one listens to the rain pattering down, to its soft thudding accompaniment and its occasional rippling arias, is to be made very credulous, very open-minded toward all hidden wonders and underlying miracles of earth. No one, under such conditions, would be surprised to open his eyes and see a small yellow-and-brown wood-fairy with a peaked cap and beady eyes perched upon the toadstool at his feet, all ready for a general Socratic dialogue.

The sound of rain, with that of wind, bears the more intimate messages to man, but birds' songs are direct appeals and never to be missed. Even the earth's sounds have liberating powers; they let us go free of our prisons and send us out into the larger life, the wider world where are scope and joy and pain and vastness and endless wonder. Who are you, they say to us, to be bound up in yourself? Are you not of us—a part of the silence and the spheric symphony, a part of the ebb

THE WIND'S VOICE

and the flow of being? Are not you, too, life and death and love and wonder and being and growth? Cast, then, the fetters; be free; and live and speak as we live and speak in the endless spaciousness of eternity.

Of all sounds none is more constantly with us than the wind's voice. It is an enemy when as little children we listen, cowering under the bed-clothes, to its ghastly night orgies. Then all the awful things we have heard of, that people this unfamiliar world where we are not yet at home or at ease, seem to be up and busy. The shutters begin to creak, the air is full of strange swishings and whisperings, weird fingers are tapping at the window-panes, and, pitched a note or two above the whistle of the wind, an unearthly voice wails and laments an unearthly horror.

But as we grow older and braver there comes an element of adventuring and romance in the wind's voice. We hear its horses galloping past us in the darkness, making for strange lands where only doughty heroes penetrate, and what is there to prevent our mounting them and galloping away from all the cark and clutch of circumstance? So, fancy rides out on the cry of the winds into lonely mountain fastnesses, to the fair land that lies the farther side of the moon, across snow-swept

THE HUMAN WAY

plains where far, far below we see a long, thin line of black wolves running, and the yelp they send up to the skies reaches us as an overtone to the wind's shrill song as we swing through space a hundred miles an hour.

Then there comes a time when, if we are good children and well brought up, we become acquainted with a little boy named Diamond, who is the intimate of the North Wind, and who, because he knew not fear, went on a whole bookful of glad adventures with her, always trusting her under her varying aspects of grave and gay, cold and gentle, although he saw her at times when her whole face turned black with blowing, or when she spread out great dark bat's wings that covered the whole sky; he heard her rage worse than the blacksmith's wife, and saw her turn at will into a serpent or a tiger by way of variety; occasionally, on her nightly voyages, she would leave Diamond on the top ledge of a great gray cathedral and let him peer down into it as it yawned below him, a silent gulf hollowed out of stone. An acquaintance that grows up from such a basis as this does away with fear, and as we grow older we learn to listen eagerly for the wind, typifying as it does to us all the scope and freedom that fills the spaces between the earth and the stars.

THE WIND'S NIGHT-SONG

When the burdens and cares of this world press too heavily on frail mortality, doubtless sleeplessness is an evil thing, and a man may well have recourse to the sage medicine-man to get rid of himself and the teasing, insistent sense of his fleshly and social state. But let a man be, as by every moral right he should be, of a clear conscience, sane nerves, and becalmed ambitions, and, above all, let him be free of all debts, and he cannot but lament the loss of so much good life in sleeping. How much joy there is in lying healthily and attentively alert through the night's still vigils! Then, chiefly, do we hear the strange discourses of the wind. We know nothing of whence it comes or whither it goes, but it flaps past us, singing unearthly melodies, clean, uncurbed, vivifying and elemental, the infinite breath whirling from eternal spaces to eternal spaces. But the wind is not only a night friend. It is a fine companion for the striding heart; for him who, in early autumn or before the birth of spring, wanders a-field just for the joy of seeing the clouds set a-dancing or hurtled in rough haste across the sky from east to west, for none knows what dire or gracious purposes. And have you ever, late in March or early in April, wandered out on a slash of land carpeted with brown pine-needles, and sat down on the

THE HUMAN WAY

soggy ground to see the sap, like purple mist, rising in the bare twigs, and heard the wind play a duet on the reeds that line the edge of the slash and the pine tops above them? Low in the reeds and high in the pines, Pan pipes—the careless, mirthful, goat-footed Pan—glad that his kingdom is waking to life again; and his song is only a little wistful, a few shifting minor intervals replacing the screechings and wailings of his winter nights. Nor is the song wholly silenced even in the most windless of moonlit summer evenings; if, in the hush, we strain our ears, we hear a long, deep, alternately indrawn and outgoing breath; is it Pan in silent ecstasy, or just the slow, sleepy breathing of the planet as it swings? Who has not felt his indolent dreams rise on such gentle summer breezes to go a-wandering among the vales of vanity?

Dickens has a charming essay on the jovial winter wind, in the chapter wherein Martin Chuzzlewit and Tom Pinch leave Mr. Pecksniff's house. What an agreeable and praiseworthy habit it was of those early Victorians (would that their like should be born again!) to sow little essays all over their novels, and what a creditable thing it would be if the living novelist would go and do likewise! But perhaps the mind of man is so narrowed by specialisation that it no longer holds innumerable

THE MESSENGER

little essays as well as its definitely conceived plots. There are as many winds as there are moods of man, but it is the jovial, boisterous winter wind that Dickens painted—a wind sweeping across breezy downs, “tracking its flight in darkening ripples on the grass and smoothest shadows on the hills.” It nipped the face and blinded the wayfarer, and stopped his breath as though he had been soused in cold water.

That was another wind which blew strong and steady and cold through Rossetti’s lines that depict more exquisitely than any others the numbness of perfect grief:

“The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead on tree and hill;
I had walked on at the wind’s will,—
I sat now, for the wind was still.”

What a universal experience that is! Who is there who hasn’t taken up the burden of sorrow too great to bear within closed doors and walked with it where the wind’s wailing and screeching was a human utterance—where headlong floods and pounding waves beat upon earth too, an impotent agony? There is one bit of prose in which the wind is captured and set to words almost as perfectly as in Rossetti’s stanza. In the last chapters of *Prince Otto*, where the romance rests in abeyance while the night falls and the dawn

THE HUMAN WAY

wakes over the tattered, fleeing princess, "the sound of the wind in the forest swelled and sank and drew near with a running rush and died away in the distance into faint whispers."

It is the very voice of life, this wind, this messenger of eternity singing from out the void into the void, beating the seas into life as it passes, cleaving the oceans into chasms, bearing the petrel, the sea-mew, the gull on its wings, sweeping clean the floors of the forests, burnishing brighter the very stars set in the arcades of night. As the human breath utters the voice in the throat, so the wind plays through all the innumerable throats of nature, waking each whistle, whirl, wail, and song to a great choral chant.

There is one other office we think of the wind as fulfilling. Who is not at moments mindful of the last hour, when the body shall have played its game to the finish and stretched itself stark and dumb for the long rest? And who can help hoping that as the soul unfurls its wings for the new and strange adventure, it shall be upborne, like the gull and the petrel, on the great wind's wings, coming even as its child, the soul, no man knows whence, going no man knows whither, yet surely, surely passing, from time to time, in the great, void spaces of night, some little lighted islands of life.

III

THE CHILDREN

MAN fixes his heart upon the mutable. It is, doubtless, the very evanescence of all beauty which puts the keen edge of poignancy to our affections. If we could look upon anything as likely to remain forever the same, we should, in all probability, postpone loving it until some more convenient season. But we look upon all things with the yearning foreknowledge of change and loss. *Toute passe*. And so dull are we in our heavy garments of clay, so unequal to the task of alertness and pursuit, that it is this very passing which consecrates.

And so it is with childhood. We look upon it and know it to be changing its aspect from day to day, nay, hour by hour fleeting past us to be lost so swiftly, so irretrievably! This it is, probably, that makes the love of childhood so spontaneous and unforced. In our gaiety a child is the most natural companion and in our grief the most heal-

THE HUMAN WAY

ing presence. And what an ever-living interest and solace is in the whole environment and circumstance of a home where children are growing up!

The other day, rummaging in the attic, back of some old shutters and decrepit, much be-labelled trunks, I found what at first sight appeared to be a gray, crumpled sheet, but when it had been thrown out on the kitchen roof and shaken free of dust and spread forth in the sunlight it proved to be a long and wide expanse of faded blue cambric, pasted over with a silver crescent moon and bunches of white tulle clouds and gilt cardboard stars—one of them very much larger and finer than the rest. Then, with the sudden vague pang that comes when one remembers, under strange skies, the things that have been and are dead, it came over me that this was the cambric sky that used, years ago, to be tacked over the nursery walls, as a canopy to the Christmas-tree, in the nursery where the grave baby, the smiling baby, and the little silent baby played with their Ruler. It is many years now since, on Christmas Eve, the three babies were deprived of three white cribs that stood in a row in the nursery, and were stowed away in strange, grown-up beds, while the Ruler, full of the keenest, gayest delight, hung three

THE CAMBRIC SKY

stockings on the hooks around the fireplace—a long, slim, black little stocking, a short white sock, and a tiny woollen sock with blue trimmings—tacked the blue cambric sky with its Star of Bethlehem over the ceiling, and let it hang down between the two eastern windows, and built up the tree in a tub in front of it. On the topmost twig there was always a paper-doll angel standing on one toe, with gilt paper wings and gauzy robes, and each twig had a coloured candle, pink and blue and white and pale yellow, to match the flames; and gilded nuts were fastened to the boughs with wires, and gay cornucopias filled with candies dangled and bobbed and weighed heavy, and there were strings of popcorn draped through the green branches; and off in the corner, hidden by the wash-hand-stand, were three large pails of water and two old blankets, placed there prudently, not by the inapprehensive Ruler at all, but by the Ruler's Ruler, who used to arrange them with his own unaccustomed hands while he muttered: "Perfectly irrational! No reason why my home and my property should be imperilled once a year by *four* children's foolish play." And yet there were only three stockings, as the Ruler would silently attest.

So I sat down out in the October sunshine on the

THE HUMAN WAY

kitchen roof and looked at the worn and ancient sky, and wondered and wondered whither the past slips away. For, under the roof, there is no nursery any more, and the young person who warily and almost imperceptibly has usurped the place of the grave baby is a pretty girl who likes jewelry for her Christmas gift—"only one piece, please, but really good"; and where the smiling baby sat there is still a smiling youth who spends Christmas afternoon cleaning guns and oiling leather, in view of setting out early on the twenty-sixth for a hunting expedition; and the silent baby's place is empty. Only the Ruler's Ruler is unchanged, and if there were to be a Christmas-tree ever again he would doubtless arrange a hose and other extinguishers and say, under his breath, "It's all nonsense."

But the beginning of Christmas in the nursery was not on Christmas Eve. It began weeks beforehand, when the Ruler, who always spent the twilight playing in the nursery, would come home very tired from down-town and tell the round-eyed, staring babies that Santa Claus was waiting to speak to her in the up-stairs back room, where babies never penetrated, because there was a long, dimly lighted passage leading thereto, in which the grave baby had placed a "naboyant" (pronounced

BEFORE CHRISTMAS

like a French word) which she had invented to terrify herself pleasantly and the younger babies less agreeably. When she was pressed to define her "naboyant" more closely, she explained that it was a round ball of fire, floating and whizzing about in the air, and it tried to get into the middle of the palm of your hand, and when it did "you'd be deaded as quick as quick, and go into the Valley of the Shadow." It was useless to try to demolish this fiction of the grave baby's, for though she exceeded the smiling baby in years and experience but twenty months, and the silent baby but three and a half years, her authority was unparalleled. Indeed, when religious instruction was first tried upon the smiling baby, and the Ruler began, after the ancient and approved method, with, "Who made you?" the smiling baby responded with unhesitating and firm conviction, "Sister made me." "Oh no," said the instructor, "sister did not make you. God made you, and He made the sun and the moon and the stars, and mamma and papa and everybody." But still the smiling baby's eyes were fixed on the older baby as he inquired, stupidly, "Sister, did you make God?"

When the Ruler emerged from the back room she would be met by three small white figures with

THE HUMAN WAY

rumpled curls and excited eyes and the question, "What did he say?" And Santa Claus's interest was invariably—how good were they? The grave baby, who was an imaginative and emotional soul, born with a conviction of sin, would never give definite answers; the smiling baby from that day to this has always been untrammelled by doubts of his own merit; and the little silent baby was never even asked, because he was still wrapped in "trailing clouds of glory."

One does not know how it happened, but the Christ-child was always a more approachable, a more gracious and even a more intimate personality among the babies than Santa Claus, though the smiling baby had once hazarded that he betted "the blessed Christ-child and Santa Claus slept together up in heaven." It was probably because the Christ-child was never supposed to ask after merits and demerits that the babies just loved Him and were never afraid. It was to Him the smiling baby prayed one night, confident of a full sympathy and understanding: "Please, wilt Thou send down into my house another little boy, just as big as me, to *fight with*." And again, one night, being a person of a speculative turn of mind, he sat bolt upright in his crib and asked, "Is blessed Christ-child in this room? Right here in this crib

CHRISTMAS EVE

by me?" Then, smiling affectionately and rolling himself well over to one side against the bars, he said, "I'm goin' to give He plenty of room."

Christmas Eve was an exciting night to every one concerned with the nursery. The babies and their big black mammy had been banished from their stronghold all day long, and at six o'clock they were put into strange beds; and the rest of the day and late into the evening the Ruler worked in the nursery. Even the twilight hour was cut short, and it was only when prayers were said that she sat with the white-robed cherubs and led them as they sang:

"Dear Father, whom I cannot see,
Look down from heaven on little me;
Let angels through the darkness spread
Their shining wings about my bed."

In the evening the black mammy, too, worked and exclaimed and carried in parcels from the back room and unwrapped, and even the Ruler's Ruler sometimes carried in the heaviest things—the hobby-horse and the doll-carriage. And at last all would be ready for the match that should set it ablaze in the morning and make it into a strange fairyland of wonders and delights.

When the morning was still black and the stars all shining bright and the babies sleeping sound,

THE HUMAN WAY

the Ruler drove across the dark city streets to a great cathedral. All along the way one would pass carriages rattling over the cobblestones, and dark, bowed figures hastening through the coldest hours of the winter night; and when the doors flew open, there was another altar ablaze with lights, and flowers were blooming everywhere, and over the heads of the kneeling throngs, floated the time-hallowed words: "*Adeste fideles*" and "*Venite adoremus.*"

They were different, little home-made words, made just for one house and the one little trio of babies, that were sung when the nursery fire was blazing at six o'clock, and the tree was all lit up and the babies in white wool wrappers and slippers were led into the nursery, the silent baby sitting upright on the Ruler's arm with wide, amazed eyes, and the babies, grave and smiling, holding each other's hands, a little bit shy and dazzled by the unwonted ways; and there they stood in line singing their own Christmas song:

"A star shone in the East one night
At Christmas-time, at Christmas-time,
And gave the watching shepherds light
At blessed Christmas-time.
A little Babe was born that night
To give the whole dark earth its light
And make the shadows take their flight
At blessed Christmas-time."

PAST IS PAST

It was a long carol of five verses, and the babies' eyes wandered and danced and their voices faltered, and usually at the end the Ruler would find herself singing all alone, while the three babies had plunged forward into the midst of their Christmas joys, and the Ruler's Ruler began to extinguish the lights and talk about his house being afire, and the day broke and a new joy was heralded upon earth.

Yes; all this was once. The Ruler, sitting in the sunlight, could see it pass like floating pictures before her eyes, and there remained nothing of it but the dusty gray sky, which must be burned. The Ruler wondered how much the smiling youth remembered and how much the flower-like, reticent girl. She wondered what knowledge of it had floated away with the silent baby. Truly man groweth up as a flower, and life fleets past him, but intangible, ungraspable, and mirage-like though it be, life's beauty lives on, ever renewing itself and beginning again in fresh places.

Unless one return to Wordsworth's "trailing clouds of glory" it would be difficult to say just why these inexperienced creatures are the most delightful talkers in all the world. But it is true that we never hang with the same wide-eyed and breathless expectancy upon the lips of the great

THE HUMAN WAY

sage or fluent orator as we do upon the oracular utterances of a child just viewing the world. Perhaps it is a faint adumbration of that rarest of God-given faculties, originality, pure and unobstructed, that holds us. At any rate, we are seldom disappointed of a little thrill of surprise when we turn to childhood for comment on life. The perception of the child is created from the inner thought and untainted by traditions and presuppositions. "Let me see," said the smiling baby, still under two, upon being shown the moon for the first time—"let me see; I'll look around and find me some more moons," and he scanned the sky hopefully. But the same experiment brought forth a widely varying result from the more literary baby, who, on being shown the moon for the first time, commented, dejectedly, "Not any cow."

Even the dangers of literature and dogma are lessened for the very young by their free powers of rearrangement and application. The grave baby, just four years old, who had been taken to church for the first time, reproduced the whole scene with much ingenuity, taking for her text, as she stood in her high-chair, "Lead me in the paths of righteousness in the presence of mine enemies"; and then descending and donning her father's old

THE CHILD TALKING

college cap, she sang with vim and endless reiteration, "Let your light so shine, little brother, let your light so shine, that God will not put you in a bushel."

Religious instruction as sifted through the childish intelligence results oddly, but it is full of the delights of the unexpected. The grave baby, being of strong theological predilections, was heard instructing her inferior thus: "Now I'll tell you exactly how I am made. First, there is little round me that is busy and does things; over that I wear a skeleton of bones and then all the sinful lusts of the flesh." Upon the superficiality of sin she might have been interpreted as having definite convictions, but when it came to the nature of Deity, patriotism obstructed her vision, for she wavered and finally confessed, "I don't know much about God anyway; only one thing for sure, He is a Virginian."

No field is shut to them, and we need not fancy them altogether cut off from the realms of philosophy. The smiling baby, gazing with real joy at a full moon, said, confidently, "It is very beautiful, and I made it myself." He was taken aside and reprimanded for laxity in integrity, but prolonged argument only resulted in the sobbing protestation, "Perhaps I did not make the realness of it, but I

THE HUMAN WAY

know I made its shape and its shining." Such was the appearance of good faith that the discomfited representative of stern morality retired with a confused sense of dealing with a full-fledged Fichtean philosopher of five.

At that early age not only life but art is full of suggestion, and much theory of life is built up upon pictorial representations. The small chubby baby, upon being reprimanded for escaping while he was being undressed and running about his room in a state of nature, turned at once to a Raphael Madonna over the fireplace, and pointing to the infant Jesus, said, triumphantly, "He used to done it."

"When they bury the body," asked the smiling baby of his sister, "how do they start the soul up to God?"

"Why, don't you know?" she said, surprised. "They chop the head off and tie little wings to the back of the neck, and it wings straight up."

It is worthy of note that in earliest life the intimacy with great mysteries is closest and surest. The grave baby at three years old being asked by the little brother, "What was the names of those angels that brang me down from heaven?" responded, without an instant's hesitation, "One was Star-Bright and the other was Pleine-de-

THE REACTION UPON LITERATURE AND DOGMA

grâce.” When she was cross-examined as to how she knew, she looked inscrutable and only said, “I always knowed.” But several years later, being told of a friend’s sudden death, she stood a moment quiet and wondering, and then swiftly propounded these questions:

“Did her body get to heaven?

“Will her soul take up her skeleton?

“Does a soul have any kind of feet?

“When she gets there will God put an angel head upon her?

“Will she wear a shirt-waist and skirt?

“Will Jesus walk down to the gate and hand her out a judgment?

“When will she get her judgment?

“Will she climb up the steps to heaven or will angels carry her? My hymn says *steps* up to heaven.

“Will she see Jesus at last *in the real*?

“And will she see God, too, *in the real*?

“I don’t want to die, because of the valley of the shadow of death; that must be very dark.”

Then, without a pause, came, as a conclusion, a quick laying aside of the whole sad matter, as she sang out, cheerily, “I am going to hop to my bath on one foot.” And she did, chanting as she went, “D-e-a-d—dead, dead, dead.”

THE HUMAN WAY

To the gentleness and delicacy of childish methods too high a praise cannot be given. No childish comment bears a sting, and when it is unfavourable it is apt to be conveyed in a negative and reluctant way. "Is that lady's back broken?" asked the little girl about the visitor who had just left. "No? I thought it might be; she's so *un*-tall." And the nurse was referred to, in a hushed aside, as "pretty unpatient and disconsatisfied to-day." Little boys seem to be born with a greater feeling of independence and less desire to deal tenderly with the universe. "How can you be naughty when you're just off your knees after asking God to make you good?" But the little boy answered, sturdily, "I told Him to do it, but if He can't do it by Hissself I won't help Him."

There was a little child who, with eighteen dolls of more or less pretensions to wholeness and good looks, lavished all her maternal fondness upon a small, chipped china hand and arm of some dead and vanished child. This disconnected member, which went by the name of "Po' baby ahm," was carried about all day, wrapped in handkerchiefs and tied with ribbons; it was carefully put to bed at night, and always had a final and unctuous petition offered up to the throne of heaven for its protection during the dark hours. It is altogether

THE CHILD AT PLAY

impossible to enter into another's scale of values, and a wise person will admit his ignorance, stand aside and watch, fearful of interference. A little boy with many expensive toys may choose to set his whole heart upon a broken shell; we cannot fathom the reason nor hope to enter into his feeling, but we can refrain from desecration and stupidity. Their ways are not as our ways and their insight is infinitely clearer.

The plays of children are best when the grown-up accepts his part as the subordinate, takes orders, and keeps in the background. In the nursery where the grave and the smiling baby lived, the most thrilling game took place each evening just before supper and the lights were brought. First, they demanded a candle with a light to it. Then the two little figures in their thin white dresses, with their curls somewhat ruffled since the early dressing hour and their eyes stretched wide with excitement, dragged their little chairs into a dark corner behind the door; they set the candle on a tiny stand between them, and there, in the little darkened space barely big enough to hold them, with knees together and the flame at the side lighting up their eager faces, they held long, rapt, whispered conversations, full of mystery and ending only with the advent of nurse, supper, and lamp.

THE HUMAN WAY

The development of the literary instinct in the nursery is an invaluable addition to the merriment of life, and all children, with due encouragement, show ability in the lines of poetry and fiction. They are naturally imitative and yet not custom-bound, and being far removed from the critical faculty they give the original impulse free play. They have an instinctive feeling for the *mot juste*. What could have been more exact than the answer of the grave baby, who cried out that she heard a noise in her room at night, and, on being asked what it was like, replied, "It most ezackly *rhymes* with what a little cricket would say."

How early and how readily they learn the art of story-telling and how exciting it is to listen, knowing the utter futility of trying to prefigure the child's sense of a *dénouement*. "Once there was a mother and her daughter," the grave baby told me, "and the mother was twenty-four and the daughter was eighteen, and as they went out to walk together a tiger came along; and the mother jumped very high over a thousand trees and then lived happy ever after, but the daughter lived in great misery in the stomach of the tiger."

Again the fable driving home a moral maxim is an idea easily annexed by the young, and the

THE LITERARY INSTINCT

same baby, having heard a few instances of this literary method, told the following thrilling event: "There was a whale and a fish and they was very good friends and used to go out bathing together. So one day they both saw a crab and they began quarrelling about who should have it. And a giant was walking along and he heard the fuss, so he took off his shoes and stockings quick and waded in and said: 'Hullo! hullo! What's all this?' And they told him and he pulled out a sword and killed them all three. And this is the punishment that comes from quarrelling."

The higher flights of the literary instinct are apt to be caught by accident and not received in the form of direct narrative or speech. None could deny that the form of literature given above was of a less high and serious nature than the little improvisation, sung by the same child when unconscious of hearers, to a sick doll rocked in the hammock:

"Oh, the queen of heaven bowed down low,
She bowed down low at night,
And gold of heaven shone 'round the babe,
The triumph babe at night;
'Tis Jesus is our triumph,
And so is the sea and sky,
And angels is our triumph,
And so is Santa Claus,

THE HUMAN WAY

And all shall come again,
When I am six years old,
And I shall lie still in my bed,
And think beautiful words."

This was evidently the love of the word for the word's sake. The new, mysterious, imported-weighted word "Triumph" had been presented to her. Such was the power and significance in the clang of it, that it might mean anything, and surely it did include all that was best of the world: a babe, Jesus, the sea, the sky, angels, and Santa Claus. Again, it was in very truth the literary instinct, for she sought no audience. She planned to lie still in the dark and think her beautiful words, as one does lie in the dark and think of whatever is best beloved for its own sake.

A collection of perfectly naïve children's letters to any one they love and trust is a most perfect mirror of the child's mind and heart. A little girl, who used her first big, scrawled, printing letters to correspond with those who lived in the same house with her, wrote:

"Late lies the flower on the grass
And its face to a sunbeam
Shall never more be seen,"

and tucked it under her father's dinner-plate. Although she lived a perfectly normal and joyous

THE YOUNG LETTER-WRITER

child's life and grew up to be a particularly serene young girl, her mind remained always vaguely open to the inherent sadness in things. That saying of Pater's that "were all the rest of man's life framed to his liking, he would straightway begin to sadden himself over the fate—say, of the flowers," was particularly true of her nature, and she had the resultant quickness of sympathy and fineness of perception to all the sorrows and humiliations of others.

The small boy who, like boys generally, considered brevity the true mark of manliness and who was deeply impressed with the dignity of property-holding, wrote in a large, scrawling hand which almost filled a page: "Dear papa, I have a pearl-handled knife. Your dutiful and obedient son." Up to that time his letters had always been signed quite simply, "Your good boy" or "Your loving boy," but with that pearl-handled knife his virtues took on a more dignified character. As strange, perhaps, as in some after-life our present troubles and worries here shall seem to us, must appear to the big, grown girl her childish confidence to the absent mother: "I don't sleep very well, I have so many things to think of before I grow up—how the months come after each other, how to get change for big money, and how to be

THE HUMAN WAY

polite to strangers.” And again she reported the iniquity of the smiling baby: “We had for our Bible lesson to-day the ‘Blessed Ares,’ and baby brother laughed and wouldn’t say his, and Mammy sent him out the room ’coz he said, ‘Blessed are the meek and they shall have a new master.’”

This careful six-year-old mother of a family of eighteen dolls sent home to an harassed and over-worked father the following genial requests: “Do, please, take care of all my precious dolls while I am gone, and tell Mammy to feed them well and sit by them while they go to sleep, and let them all sleep together in my bed. Tell them I miss them very much; and tell my go-cart that too. And, dear father, will you please have your picture taken for me with Mammy and with all my dolls. But if that costs too much just have a picture of the dolls, for Mother has your picture (I am sorry it looks so cross), and I can see Mammy with my mind’s eye, but I want a picture of my dear dolls taken all together and each one separate, just as they are. It does not matter that they are some broke and that the littlest baby has lost her head. I love them just as they are, and I want very good pictures, please.”

A tiny boy, away on a farm, wrote home: “I saw a cat catch a rat; she just grabbed him with

THE NARRATIVE

all her finger-nails"—and the same little boy, touched by an ardent sympathy for the father in the hot city, wrote: "I ask God every night not to let you have yellow fever. I always say 'Wilt thoust,' so I guess He'll 'tend to it." The technique of a correct address compassed, he felt that even Deity would be merciful. For the same father he inscribed a long tale, formed upon the model of such literature as he had absorbed on the subject of a saint and a friendly beast. The tale ended dramatically: "Then the deer came panting and prancing up to the babe, and seeing it, behold, the deer was tender and wouldn't fight, but he took up the young child and nursed it till it grew to be a fine, large, fat saint."

Once writing becomes a pleasant occupation in itself, and an intimate knowledge of the formalities of letter-writing a source of pride, parents are apt to find small notes put about to waylay them all through the day. By the breakfast plate, for instance: "Dear Mother, If you are not busy please sharpen all my school pencils and believe me always, ever cordially yours, C."

The firelit room and the candle play, the halting speech, the grasping intelligence and the tiny white-robed figures pass, as all things mortal pass. At best there stand in their places ruddy football

THE HUMAN WAY

players and girls busy with domestic interests, but while it lasts, the sweetest, the most beguiling spot upon earth is the nursery. It is a remedy for the disease of world-weariness, and a refuge from all that is flat, stale, and unprofitable. It is the one entirely unforced natural consolation in life. It is the eternal promise and the renewing of the world. Though all else should fail there are still children attempting life and the world afresh, and who shall say that some of them may not conquer what has vanquished us.

But the nursery is filled for so short a time that before we are half aware, there comes upon us the moment when we must send the little folk forth, to stand, poor, wee, wayfaring souls, on their own merits in an indifferent world. The time when the listening home audience gathers up the every utterance with loving appreciation is all over then, and they are judged by the actual pertinency of their words.

Hamlet, being king in the realm of both ideas and words, naturally enough felt Polonius nothing more than a dry old chatterer, uttering dull, traditional saws without vital significance. But a time comes in most mature lives when, as we speed our young out into the world, the rôle of Polonius seems for the moment to be forced upon us. If,

POLONIUS'S SAWS

at the critical instant, we seem to lack the necessary epigrammatic wisdom or those flashes from the infinite that occasionally shed light upon the affairs of this finite world, we can at least console ourselves with the thought that words, except to a born lover of words, are a vanity of vanities, and that not our utterances will engrave themselves upon the young memories, but our little daily ways and habits, our smiles and silences and ordinary courses.

It is futile to drop the burden of our maturer comprehension of life upon the young mind about to go out from us, for the knowledge of virtue, like the knowledge of letters, is progressive, and only the prodigy learns his letters from Kant's *Critique*. So, to tell the child as he departs that he projects from his own spirit the world into which he is going, and that according to the force of this spirit shall his control be over that world, is worse than wasteful. Indubitably true as it is, the child will never believe it. The illusion of the outer reality is a step in nature, and is for certain stages compelling. Only after long experience do we grasp that we mould the countenances we look upon by the light shed from the depths of our own spirits. There is nothing to be gained by telling the child that there is no true happiness to be had until we have over-

THE HUMAN WAY

come fear and desire, for the young person is compact of desires and the fear that he may miss them. Like the rest of us who have attained to Polonius's years and wisdom, he must go through the tragic discipline of tasting his desires and finding them Dead Sea fruit; he must grasp the prizes of life and see them crumble to ashes as he holds them in his hands, for in such wise only does the spirit get understanding. All the true realisation that the flower fadeth and the grass withereth, and that man is but a grasshopper on the circle of earth, is a later acquisition, and that sense of proportionate values which the Catholic Church teaches us is a gift of the Holy Ghost can only come to the young through miraculous interposition.

However, truthfulness and good nature are virtues that may be described and extolled to him, and if it be an intelligent child we are addressing we may force upon his attention the fact that in the eyes of the Almighty one creature is as vital as another, and that in as far as he can realise and act upon this truth is he likely to find peace and harmony in himself. We can offer the child some glimpses, too, of the consoling beauty and order of the picture in which life is set. There are both distraction and solace to be derived from the holy method and regularity with which the sun is lifted

THE PASSING

above and dropped below the horizon, from the secret journeys of the moon by day and its luminous wanderings by night, from the lighting up of the stars and from the fellowship of beasts and birds and plants. We can assure him that life is indeed like a garden wherein an industrious insect will suck honey and store it away for higher purposes of which he may know nothing, and that even if there are poison-plants, poison is often medicine.

But if, as may chance between the aging and the budding minds, our best wisdom may emerge dusty as Polonius's saws, there is the consolation of knowing that atmosphere is more convincing than advice, and environment begets safer effects than sermons. Moreover, it is not all our own fault but a part of the order of nature, that morality must be hacked out of the rough block of life anew by each workman. Like religion, it is not a great thing outside ourselves toward which we may be led, but it is the transformation we make of the brute facts of life, to return again to the spirit which begot us. The generations of man rise and pass like a wind, and no man knows whence they come or whither they go—but the ethical intent of life stands firm and rock-fast, while the wind of destiny blows into the world and out again the little lives of men.

THE HUMAN WAY

And, after all, the main thing for us is to have caught the joyous moment on the wing; to have taken all the cheer and the solace and the joy of the childish companionship, and to have given the little budding soul its due share of love and protection while we could.

IV

FRIENDSHIP

ONLY the elect among mortals have a sense of inborn worth. The God within us, whose image we are, is reached only after long search and much trial and testing, and in early life while we are still but half established upon earth, our sense of personal value is the free gift of those who are good enough to love us and believe in us and give us their friendship. The very greatest tragedy of life is not the breaking of ties, as has so often been said, though that is sad enough in all conscience, but it is, by misfortune, by infelicity, by unworthiness, to miss making ties. It is, perhaps, too little insistent a truth to us that love is the most significant factor in life. Beauty, riches, luxuries, are all good things—they count; but it is love, after all, that enhances enjoyment, lends meaning and import to beauty, and supplies a reason for being. It costs a great price undoubtedly; we pay heavily in anxieties, trepidations, fear of loss, and finally

THE HUMAN WAY

we pay also the ultimate price, for we survive the loss and go on along the ways that were once ablaze and full of sunshine, with only the slant, pale rays of memory to light us—and yet, and yet, love is worth it. And in love are included all the varying grades of feeling from the first social good-will to the most exclusive and absorbing friendship. Each in its different degree confers value upon life.

Modern literature, in its emphasis upon courtship and marriage, has made too little of friendship. But, after all, courtship and marriage are but the preludes to the closest and most lasting of friendships, and these are, or ought to be, as strenuous in service, as full of rites and ceremonies and beauties, as courtship. A great deal of care and detail attaches to the forming and maintaining of a real friendship, and the average mortal may find it calls into play all of courage and skill he has to keep the tie of friendship clear and fair and trustful through the stress and difficulty of life, the intermeddling and gossiping and mischief of idlers and onlookers.

But, after all, the difficulty of such adventure has its own allurements. If youth presents us with easy and ready companionships, maturity makes heavy demands. To find a worthy friend and to keep that worth ever in mind despite blemishes

LOVE, THE GENERAL HERITAGE

and lapses, to hold with a loyalty which is a religion by the choice once made, to decorate the tie with the rites of remembrance, is to add one of the greatest joys to life. Fidelity is one of man's strongest protests against the order of this world where all flows past us, where hours and seasons alike loom over the horizon line but to drop away on the opposite side. Life moves through shifting scenery and changing interests, but he who shall have held close to some one or two steadfast affections, making them stable in a whirling scene, has made some claim upon immortality. Through life and out into the unknown dream to take one's stand upon one faith, one loyalty, one affection, is to practise immortality in a fleeting present.

Love is a more general heritage. It permeates all levels and in some way lightens all human lives, great or small, noble or mean; it is a natural instinct, a most obvious impulse; but friendship is a rarer, a more difficult achievement, and sets sterner requirements to the applicants. It lifts the desire of permanence to a more abstract level—not bodying forth our tendencies and desires in this world, but holding above the storm and stress of life a given faith, and the refusal to let it succumb to the cruelties of time's processes.

These, indeed, are becoming less formidable now-

THE HUMAN WAY

adays; we are offered on all sides theories of prenatal existences and long sequences of lives. We are familiar with the insistent repetition of this theory throughout Browning's poetry. To him it seemed the only possible justification of the broken arc of this life. This plausible theory remedies a little the dizziness of a monotonous forever, while it yet saves a man from the lax belief that life is a futile game ending in nothing. Even though these theories do no more than cater to the human propensity to see in quantitative units rather than in endless expanse, at least they intensify the interest of the moment and give one a sense that life, with all its disappointments and limitations, is but an incident. "If, therefore," writes a recent author, "two people love one another in this life, we have, on the assumption that they are immortal, good reason for believing that their other lives are bound up with one another, not for one life only, but forever. This would not involve their meeting in every life any more than it would involve that they should meet every day of each life. Love can survive occasional absences and is often the stronger for them." To those who like to think in wide realms, there is some fascination in this idea. It has the expansive charm of that prospective meeting in "Evelyn Hope":

A SEQUENCE OF LIVES

“Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse not a few;
Much is to learn and much forget,
Ere the time be come for taking you.”

An undoubted service of this speculation is the scope it offers the romancer. What a long breath of relief we draw when we hear of a whole series of lives in which a man may go on acquiring experience, building up a character or capacity, increasing his knowledge or practising his virtues! This is literally the “wages of going on, and not to die.” As to the love stories, obstacles providing wholesome absences and delays are indefinitely increased. The direction taken by the impetus of the soul may separate two well-meaning and loving personalities until only by describing a complete circle in the heavens may they return to the point upon which they originally agreed.

Some writer has recently put tests to those contemplating marriage. “If you can laugh together, weep together, see the sunset together,” he says, “it is safe.” But for marriage or for friendship, the test, to be perfect, should include, “If you can walk together and read together.” The weeping together is the least important test. We can weep with so many people. Tears, after all, are ready and pity is easy, and a harder task is to live in the

THE HUMAN WAY

comedy that lies above the level of the tragic. As to looking at the sunset and reading together, every great eulogy of friendship in English poetry is founded on the fact that the friends shared the same love of beauty and the same devotion to the Muse. From Milton to Arnold, the great English elegies commemorate, as the chief joys and dignities of friendship, a love of beauty and a pursuit of nobility.

The common enthusiasm for beauty, the shared faculties, are the chief bonds of a friendship. And enthusiasm is easier in buoyant youth than in disillusioned age. As life spins past us it is natural that coldness invade us and hopefulness be less joyously upspringing. We who have lived must have seen the multiplication of sins and of sorrows, must have learned to renounce many partisanships and to shrug our shoulders while the world wags on its own way; the soil of a man's heart by ordinary processes is like to become fit for negations and indifference. How have things we set our faith upon crumbled and betrayed us; how have our friends passed out into the unknown, inscrutable future! As for our desires, either we cannot attain them and in their stead a sense of black failure and thwarting lives in us, or we do attain them and find them bitter as Dead Sea fruit in our

THE COMMON CULT

hands—useless and gray as wind-blown ashes powdering our blossoms. To this pass must we all come at some time—all except those very brisk and busy folk who do things so hard that they have not time to look up or down or round about, and so manage to get through existence without discriminating between beauty and ugliness at all. These people, it has been said, make the world go round; possibly they do, but one thing is certain, they do not make it swing to music, and if the earth joins the stars in the chorus of the spheres, it is not their doing.

At any rate, with these we are not dealing, but with those who in the willing service of friendship constantly discriminate between what is fair and enlivening and what is ugly and deadening. If we will have life repay us, even to the last, when age and decay encroach, then *il faut cultiver son jardin*—we must be unremitting gardeners of life, we must hoard beauties, we must keep record of them as they flit, we must be ever alert to catch the essence of the rare and worthy moment and to prolong its life in memory and in written annals or imitative images. If we ourselves live largely by the past, we also are creating in turn a new past for posterity, and it matters infinitely that our legacy to them should be beautiful; not merely use-

THE HUMAN WAY

ful or labour-saving or protective, but that it should have in it that beauty and harmony which alone can console us in age, and make life, looked back upon from the vantage of half a century of years, a feast of exquisite though transient impressions.

No; when the paralysis of old age creeps upon us and our hopes no longer live on the mere animal spirits of youth, it is the beauty we may have snatched together by the way which shall console us and hearten us and bind us closer. Comfort and successes wear as thin as poverty and failures if we have placed our faith in mere material things:

“Just when we’re safest there’s a sunset touch—
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one’s death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides—
And that’s enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as Nature’s self
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring
Round the ancient idol on his base again—
The grand Perhaps!”

Only such beauty as we have found and treasured can keep the heart in us and our friendship alive—either the beauties we have read of or seen or pondered; or, if we be of the most fortunate of the sons of men, the beauties we have created, or seeing, have known how to give account of.

THE SHARED PURSUIT

There is one vital truth about friendship: it is never based upon evil. Let a woman prefer gossip to service, and a man gain to honour, and they may get a good deal out of it; they may have acquaintances and companions, but friends they cannot have. Friendship, by its nature, implies a common pursuit of noble ends. It is permanent, and evil is always transitory; the temporary vestment of illusion which, bit by bit, we strip from ourselves; and whoever lowers our ideals or lessens our faith in good must and will perish out of our lives. Some one to whom I said this replied that many of the most sublime instances of friendship could be drawn from the annals of the meanest, most elementary natures. And this is quite true, for there is no stage of human life so low but that even there men posit an ideal and hold to it. The loyalty and good faith, the self-immolation in the cause of friendship shown among the thieves and liars of Gorki's *Ex-men* is one of the great strokes of his genius. Even there friendship means an ideal, so revered that even life itself may be lightly laid down in its service. Such folk have often, too, one of the greatest privileges of friendship, that of loving a person whom no one else can love—of standing firm upon one's own judgment of worth, of seeing what perhaps only God and one's self can see,

THE HUMAN WAY

the worth and the value of the despised and rejected.

Than this, there is but one more difficult demand of friendship: the power to love our friend in his greatest prosperity. It may seem almost too mean a frailty to mention, and yet I have seen it in folk of many finenesses; they could stand by a friend in misfortune but they could not stand by him when the sun shone on him. Envy sometimes divorces friends who stand all the tests of suffering. This is an ignoble thing, and makes one shame-faced to mention, but it is true. And there is another demand—that of bearing with our friend's failings. A staunch faith is as much a virtue in friendship as it is in religion. We must deliberately and with wilful intent fix the mind on our friend's finer traits, accepting him for better and for worse as we do the unfathomable universe, hoping that somehow his failings are but good in the making.

There is in the *Katha Upanishad* a very ancient prayer of two friends which one notes not so much for fervour as for its touching content. "May He protect us both," it begins, and continues, "May He enjoy us both." One may search the collects of the Church in vain for a parallel to this—a sense of care for the joy of God. To be sure, the Cal-

AN ANCIENT PRAYER

vinistic catechism opens up grandly with the whole duty of man, which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever; but that, after all, is still for the benefit of the creature, though it might be tacitly intended to make for the fuller joy of the Creator. True it is, that one of the stock questions for self-examination of the Calvinist-bred conscience is whether the soul could accept eternal damnation for the glory of God, but this is at best a sorry enjoyment to extend to our Creator, and there is apt to be a lurking sense that one's willingness is likewise one's means of escape. Still, the extent to which one is willing to suffer that another may rejoice is the ultimate test of sincerity of affection. But the real point of this ancient prayer seemed to be the desire to hold a human relation at so high a level that the Creator Himself might be glad in it.

"May our wisdom grow bright together," the little prayer continues. It has been pointed out to us that in as far as we suffer only from limitation and imperfection, our Creator must suffer with us and in us, so that the interests of God and man would, in the last analysis, be identical, and as our wisdom brightens this joy becomes fuller. Indeed, we can only think of His untroubled perfection while we struggle if we accept some view in which

THE HUMAN WAY

the threads of sorrow and mistake enwoven in the tapestry of life are but the necessary contrasts and shadows which complete the beauty of the whole. But, even so, the thought of adding to the sum of light and perfection in creation, by our human relations, is a powerful stimulus toward fineness of conduct and thought.

It is a common thing for people to be restrained from unworthy deeds and ungentle speech by consideration for another's feeling; they shrink from witnessing immediate and visible pain. But a less usual care is that the whole stretch of a relationship be kept, across the gulf of years—aye, for a lifetime, mayhap—a matter of such beauty that "He may enjoy us both."

Life, after all, is made of the intricate relations in which we stand to other men; not of things, nor yet of activities, tasks, and pleasures. Many and various, major and minor as these relations may be, there yet remains not only an aspect of conduct suitable to each, but a definite choice as to the plane of exaltation upon which each relationship shall be held. If exaltation is a level many fear, where, as on all heights, the vision may easily swim and the thoughts grow heady, yet when we contemplate the sordidness and flatness which paint in dull drab the recurrent days of average

EFFORT

life, we grow to feel that even a fall from a dizzy height may be better than the weary dragging of the feet across a dusty plain.

And to keep a relation at point of exaltation requires effort. No one has ever yet drifted into nobility. No one, sad as it may seem, has ever achieved a fine and lasting friendship any more than a complete marriage, a close and helpful bond of parent and child, without a conscious struggle; for a fine relation shoots out beyond the necessary and obvious duties and decorates itself with works of supererogation. These are the tasks that a man in love instinctively performs. In that state of divine enthusiasm the set limits of duty seem a hopelessly meagre expression of the surplus emotion. But being in love, like all enthusiasms, is of the spirit, and the wind of the spirit bloweth where it listeth and cannot be counted upon to abide. The gift of such visitation of emotion is a chance and casual comer to poor mortality, though doubtless if this were paradise each human being would perennially be in some such fervent frame of mind toward every other being. But, under earthly conditions, it sets the nerves to irritated tingling, and by its very unwontedness sets the brain to inventing rhymes. To follow Cupid for his loaves and fishes is not feasible as a permanent pursuit, and

THE HUMAN WAY

the true task is to turn the spontaneous glow of feeling into a steady current of ready sympathy and acceptable service through all the days.

Effort, then, is the first condition of an adequate human relation. Perhaps the power of unselfish enjoyment is the second. Nothing so smooths the roughness out of the path of life as the gift of ready humour untouched by malice. Half the melodramas and turbulent tragedies of existence are done away with by the wholesome habit of greeting life's incongruities with laughter. "Not even their pains must make them sorrowful," writes an old Italian poet of true lovers, and the maxim holds even more steadfastly true of the less enthusiastic relations in life—those slower feelings, standing off from the momentary impulse while they steadfastly build and laboriously cement the temple of their harmony.

Another truth upon which all satisfactory friendship is based is the settled conviction that it is not what is given us that adds to the joy of being and the sacredness of life, but what we give. It is infinitely better to have felt without return than to have accepted without feeling. It is just this independence of the perfect relation, its power of creating and completing its own existence, which makes

THE IMPREGNABLE ARCH

steadily more and more, as we realise it, for the fulness of enjoyment.

And since we accept it that we are to give without thought of receiving, so ought we also to insist on giving our best. It is one of the errors of friendship to fancy any mood good enough for the friend. "He will know what I mean!" Doubtless! But it is none the less blasphemy to offer a friend less than our noblest. "With your friend you will wear no garment?" cries Zarathustra. "To honour him you show yourself as you are? Nay; rather must ye fear nakedness. Only the gods dare discard their raiment. For your friend you cannot adorn yourself too richly, since you must be to him an arrow and an aspiration toward super-man." The reserves which mean courtesy, restraint and beauty are due to our friend much more than they are to the chance outsider. It is not insincerity but respect which leads us to hide from our friend the insignificant sordid details, the feeble moods and reiterant frailties. To him we love is due our highest and noblest self.

Any two who share their struggles and their aspirations build better than they know. Man projects his interests far above himself, and to meet and lean against kindred interests at a height forms an impregnable arch of accomplishment and

THE HUMAN WAY

power. In every way, the life of friendship is the acquisition of double vitality, for it is to have all one's own mind, and all another's. But it can only be based upon a fundamental, inborn likeness and such circumstances as shall establish and increase the likeness. Montaigne tells a tale of one Eudamidos, who had two friends. Eudamidos, being on his death-bed, and very poor, made a will in which he bequeathed: "To Aretheus the keeping of my mother, and to maintain her when she shall be old; to Charixeus the marrying of my daughter and to give her as great a dower as he may; and in case he shall chance to die before, I appoint the survivor to substitute his charge and supply his place." Carixeneus did indeed die five days later, and Aretheus maintained the mother and adopted the daughter; and "Of five talents that he had he gave two and a half in marriage to one only daughter that he had, but the other two and a half to the daughter of Eudamidos, whom he married, both in one day." St. Gregory said: "Love giveth great gifts, else it is not love," and doubtless a friendship that would question of much or of little in service would be a very poor matter.

It is the law of price that our greatest expansion and deepest joy should likewise cost our keenest suffering. High emotions come hand in hand, and

THE INVISIBLE PAIN

who dares love much must likewise be willing to suffer much. But does not the greatest expansion of life come through pain? To lose a perfect companionship is to accept the greatest of human sorrows, and with it the greatest exaltation and expansion of soul. It means, indeed, to live a life of daily death.

"Since the time I lost him," writes Montaigne, "I doe but languish; I doe but sorrow; and even those pleasures all things present me with, instead of yielding me comfort, doe but redouble the grief of his losse. We were copartners in all things. All things were with us at half; methinks I have stolen his past from him. I was so accustomed to be ever two and so enured to be never single that methinks I am but half myselfe."

And Tennyson, feeling the pain of so profound a division, writes:

"Behold I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

"Thy voice is on the rolling air,
I hear thee when the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in its setting thou art fair."

The very pain of loss seems to bring to the birth that quickened and multiplied perception which

THE HUMAN WAY

gives us hold upon a life beyond ourselves. We can, at need, conceive of ourselves as dead, but of our friend we know of a full surety that death itself could die sooner than he. He passes beyond our touch only to reappear in every beautiful sight and uplifted thought with intensified presence. If we pluck a flower, we see it still with his eyes and our own. If we watch the starry heavens, we know him there and still in us; and we begin to feel the mystery of being, the unity of—

“The search and the sought and the seeker
The soul and the body that is.”

For more than all else a true friendship will initiate us into some sort of sense of immortality. No mortal experience can give us comprehension of it, but to lose, into the unknown and unfathomable, that which was dearer to us than our own life and our own consciousness is to come as near as we may to a feeling of immortality.

Hearn, in his letters, exclaims: “There is no singular—no ‘I.’ ‘I’ is surely collective. . . . When you felt the charm of that tree and that lawn, many who would have loved you were they able to live as in other days were looking through you and remembering happy things.” When, then, we are accepting the sorrows of the world, are we, per-

EXALTATION

haps, letting unseen visitants work out to the end their old, time-worn griefs and abasements? Are they looking through our eyes and saying: "Not only *is* this life; it *was* life long ago; it has been life since ever men looked at the structure of the world?" If a man has power to change by his effort or his strength or his will any of these things, shall he, perhaps, be hushing to sleep old griefs and healing age-long hurts, so that in the end men may hope that even that great thing that seemingly rolls so independently by them, Life, may become a matter for transformation? And in how far is it worth while to take thought about life? What can thought do for the brute struggle with chaos and grief and destruction outside the doors? If it be of any value at all it must fulfil two functions. It must offer rest and refreshment in the realms of wisdom and love to fortify a man to bear the spectacle of so much defeat. And more than that, it must teach us to enter the battle from time to time, extending, however little, the realms of wisdom and love; pushing an inch away the barriers of chaos and destruction; gathering up hope and courage and good-will and pardon, even to the tiniest fragments, that nothing be lost that may avail for the ultimate solidarity of humankind. And when finally each man's sorrow and need are every man's

THE HUMAN WAY

sorrow and need, some new light may be shed on the inevitable ills—change and mutability, parting and death; then more freedom may be given us along the ways of what we call the infinite.

And what is friendship preparing us for? Does it not really happen that when the bodily life ceases to make its claims the invisible life expands and increases till a sure sense of companionship, full and complete, grows up in us? We have an idle habit of thinking of the soul as a tiny spark, an inhabitant almost imperceptible dwelling in the body. But does the reality not seem to be far nearer to that pictured by the great poet, just deceased:

“The body (I might say) is immersed in the soul as a wick is dipped in oil, and its flame of active energy is increased or diminished by the strength or weakness of the fecundizing soul. But the oil, this soul, is enriched an hundredfold by the infusion of the holy spirit; the human will is intensified by union with the divine will—the universal will—and for the flame of human love or active energy is substituted the intenser flame of divine love and divine energy.”

Does it not truly happen that by living, by acquiescing, a kind of heavenly magnetisation takes place, drawing the needle of our compass till it points unwavering toward that larger will which

THE GREAT COMPANIONSHIP

is not our own? So that in lieu of the clamour and frail succour of man's human companionship we learn to be aware of the invisible presence that dwells so close to us, and is audible in the hush and discernible in the dark—that presence which even to try to express outwardly for a moment is to diminish its being, since it seems always that man's silence is nearest to God's speech.

And who shall assure us that when we shake off the dust of the body and turn deaf ears to all sounds, which are but the foam on the ocean of silence, we shall not actually see, with some sense undreamed of by our earthly sight, the invisible companion, who has holden us through the thick darkness, borne with our foolishness and ignorance, comforted our loneliness, and guided us in safety to the ultimate bourne?

V

HUMAN RELATIONS

IT is a depressing thing to watch humanity as it streams past us on the street. To jostle one's kind in thoroughfares and in shops is to see humanity in the gross and under one of its least pleasing aspects. To see so many faces all strained, over-eager, self-absorbed—or worse, drab, dreary, futile, lack-lustre—gives one pause instinctively to ask: "Why do they live? What makes the dull driving worth while?" It is a sad panorama, this endless whirl of tired people, ugly and disfigured by the exigencies of life. The unceasing struggle has rubbed off the bloom of life, and as we look in their faces we see there all the marks of living either in the glamour of the past or the hope for the future. The present moment seems but a dull thud of time to be endured while they press on to the next. So, one by one, the moments drip away, and this they call life. There seem to be too many of us in this great ill-differentiated mass of people,

THE SAD PANORAMA

all unsmiling, hurrying, eager to attain an unseen goal, and pushing toward it as if harried by an invisible thong.

What an experience it would be, what an enlivening and enriching experience, to peer behind the ugly mask and see what lay back of the stupid haste and seemingly useless activity! If one were free to stop a man and demand the heart of his motive and his deep-hidden desire, what significance would be added to the scene! If for a moment one might but play the part of the fairy in the old tales and grant each man a single wish, what a strange insight one would gain into the life beneath the dull appearance! "What one thing will you have to make you happy?" we should ask. It might be money, or health, or power to stay the approach of death, or toys, or jewels, or the annihilation of time and space, but one thing we should learn: each one's wish would include another than himself. No one wishes all alone. Behind the mask, after all, a spirit hides, shy, elusive, exquisite, debonair, easy to overlook; but, once lighted upon, the spirit justifies humanity even as wisdom, were it accessible, might. It is not splashing over our dingy fates with a dash of romance that lends life dignity, but it is the discovery that the endless chain of human relation-

THE HUMAN WAY

ships is never snapped off. If we were free to mark our man and follow him home, we should find there that all the activity of his being includes another than himself—some one to whom he lends strength and protection. And that needier one, we should find him, too, passing on the solaces of the way to some one yet frailer, more adrift upon the spinning planet. So, if we search beneath mere surfaces, we do actually get the sense of being members of one body. If the outside of life is often disheartening, somewhat spattered over with clay and powdered with dust, at the core of life we find a point of relief, the tenderness of each man for his own, the tiny wavering flame of affection, the pious rite, the unquenchable ideal.

It need not greatly matter that as yet we have not got much further than the occasional glimpse of the divine spark, that the surfaces of human relations are still rough and jagged, and that the fewest of men feel anything but the immediate connecting links in the chain of human solidarity. We must remind ourselves that life's processes are slow, and a thousand years in His sight but as one day. The tiger in human nature takes a long time to kill utterly. The sense of man's relationship to man is steadily expanding, as we see by the many organisations of responsibility and helpfulness.

BEHIND THE MASK

Of course, the most natural bonds to humanity are the ties of blood and kinship with which a man is born in the home plot, where the roots of life shoot down and draw nourishment and being. Where these are natural and happy, a man starts life with an immeasurable advantage. To have "folks," in the Yankee phrase, to start life loving and beloved by them, is to begin with home and property—a happy point of departure for further relations. And the ties of blood, because they are the first and the strongest, can never be torn asunder without agony; for man, however his opinions may differ from those of his kin, cannot do away with the ties which make him, after all, one of his own tribe. There is the sacred likeness of voice and gesture, habits of speech and outlines of body; there are the preferences reminiscent of the ancient common life, the memories and associations, the predilections and aversions owned in common. That such bonds should be broken at times is inevitable, but it is futile to try to minimise the pain it must bring. Indeed, one turns again in a circle here. It is with all human relations even as it is with friendships: just in proportion as they are capable of giving us joy, so also is their power great to give us pain. It is a wise man indeed, who learns to suck the honey and escape the poison.

THE HUMAN WAY

But even a very little experience of life teaches us to avoid unnecessary pangs and to escape exaggerated agonies. He is the clever man who, if he has to suffer, suffers to some purpose and wears an impenetrable armour against unnecessary sensitiveness. There was once a pretty French maid with an unruffled, rose-petalled face, who for many years held a position deemed by outsiders next to impossible. When the temperamental horizon about her blackened, and the lightning whizzed and the thunder clapped, she raised a round, dimpled chin an inch higher into the air, and pursued her vocation stolidly, commenting, "What I care?" The results were excellent. The storms beat about her, but they did not beat her. In much the same way a sturdy young Swedish girl was put in a position where at least a dozen young American women had failed and retreated because it was "too awful" or "too impossible," and her only comment was, "I have seen worse." What worse had been, to school her to such fine indifference was never divulged, but, at least, all observers knew that it had served a purpose; it had clothed her in a saving armour, and she succeeded where others failed.

Suffer one must and shall, since only so may a man lift himself from a beast to a spirit, but it lies

THE ARMOUR OF INDEPENDENCE

with us to choose whether we shall expend our life-energy in futile and wasteful suffering, or whether we shall suffer for a worthy cause and to good purpose. To cry over a spoiled dinner or a cut finger leaves less emotion ready for a national calamity or a devastating earthquake. To worry or fret over our own or our children's worldly prosperity and educational advantages, robs us of clear and unbiassed strength to distinguish amongst relative values and to know the real from the illusive. Each man needs to weave a garment for his own sensitiveness; he must wrap it round, and be able to retort to the small finger-shakings of Fate, "What I care?" Why should any one break his heart over a misunderstanding? It would be nothing more than a foolish waste of hearts! All human relations are not worth tinkering at all the time. If they are inclined to snap, there is nothing to do but let them go and hope they link on elsewhere. To be misunderstood by a man, or a hundred men, or a thousand, is, if one faces it bravely, no more than to be misunderstood by so many men. What matters is, that, despite all opposition and all difficulty, one should be able to face one's self unashamed, and present at the end of life a fairly wrought body of feeling, honestly and bravely cherished. Let the small events pass as

THE HUMAN WAY

they will on the whistling winds of chance; do not lend too anxious an ear to the moods and vagaries of other men, but pursue with unabated vigour the chosen aims, working diligently on those affections in life that are in your own hands to mould, and leave the rest to fate or Providence, chance or destiny. We cannot keep perfect every chance relation, and often we must accept passive endurance as the part we have to play.

There is indeed a limit to the area where a man may work upon his own life, and it would be hard to overestimate the value of a wise passiveness, a staunch faith, a strong indifference, when the limit is reached. If all that seems most beautiful and worthy of treasuring to us is yet subject to the law of mutability, it is well to meet the fact with courage, since no effort alters it. It is wasteful to expend emotion on futile regrets. We cannot control the coming and the passing of other men, or the turn of their desires; but we can control ourselves, and the less strength we expend in crying out upon the inevitable the more power we shall have.

To the religious soul, to the mortal who yearns after the perfection of human relations, there is no greater sorrow than this—that a part of our human limitation is the necessity for discarding imper-

INCOMPLETE RELATIONS

fect and incomplete relations, for facing and admitting our mistakes of choice and letting them go. We must, it would seem cold-heartedly, select companions. We must distinguish between those with whom we practice a reciprocal give and take, and those to whom we can minister. Indeed, we must distinguish as well those who merely bend down to us; we must treasure the passing blessing and make no claims. But in all these varying grades of intercourse a man can refrain from open cruelty. He need never be, as the *Sutta* says, "Harsh spoken and like a beast, delighting in injuries of others." There are, if a man hunt for them, gentle and delicate modes of distinction that leave no wounds. For in the end the great consideration of life is that we should not increase the sum of its pain. The austerest withdrawals, made in silence, have not the harshness, the positive ugliness, of speech; and there is much of life too inevitably sad for words, over which it is best a veil should be thrown.

And again, no exigency can ever arise which calls for vengeance. To return a wrong by another wrong has never, by any mathematical computation, made other than two wrongs in the world. To imagine that a man can enrich himself by robbery is sheer intellectual stultification. Whatever a

THE HUMAN WAY

man takes from another to the other's loss and detriment becomes the impoverishment of the robber, paradoxical as it may sound, and another's suffering can never be our gain. We have but to look at the spiritual pauperism of the unrighteously rich to know this. Long before Christianity formulated the right doctrine of revenge, the true spirit existed in the Eastern religions, and yet even to-day man goes on hopefully returning an injury with an injury, trusting that a right will emerge. The Hebrew law was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but the Supreme Sage said, if any man take thy coat, give him thy cloke also.

To average man a sage's ideas are apt to look chimerical, until little by little, here and there, they filter through, are acted upon enough to show their visible truth, and then they also become facts—the tangible, practical truths of living. The relation of idea to fact is not antithetical, it is merely progressive, like the relation of future to past. The fact is the thing *done*, made, finished; the standing, brute obstacle in the world, against which the idea hurls itself. The fact, being created, is outside us, has apparently a separate life and being of its own, while the idea is still in us, intimate, pliable, within our grasp to project at will into the future, and by transforming and creating we get a new and larger

REVENGE

objective world. But the truth remains, that it is the idea that creates new facts and transforms past ones. It may take centuries to bring about a large enough aggregate of ideas to produce a self-evident fact, but it is none the less sure that the thinking, the ideals, of people of to-day are the facts and the truths of to-morrow.

So revenge, if one ponder upon it, is just a false computation of past ages. It is many centuries since it was corrected, and authoritatively. "But I say unto you that ye resist not evil." And this really works the only effective revenge. The most scorching sorrow that can befall a man is to come to a realising sense of his own unworthiness; and this comes *not* when he is injured, not when he sees violence and anger and passions like his own, but when, by chance, he enters into the presence of purity and renunciation. There is great truth in the answer Tolstoi offered those who asked him if he would remain quiescent if he saw a man brutally killing a child. He said, "He wouldn't kill it if I were passing." Mildness and wisdom, love and renunciations, have their own lightnings and their scorching and penetrating powers, if man would but rely upon them. And only these lightnings have heat and smelting and fusing power. These conquer the enemy by winning him over to us, and

THE HUMAN WAY

his life and ours is enlarged. By every human being one can love and bring into further life, one is richer; by every death or partial death caused by anger or alienation, one is stripped; and isolation is the ultimate tragedy of life, the final result of sin. Wherever a beneficent relation is maintained between two human beings, a link is forged in the chain which stretches between humanity and divinity; wherever hatred or injury comes, a link is snapped.

Let the red slayer think he slays. But it is all futile. The deed comes back to the doer, and the thought returns upon the thinker, and love comes home to the lover, and the crime belongs to the criminal; and each man rears the walls of his spirit's temple, and the spirit is confined within them till it grows too large and rends its own work and begins anew on a larger basis. This is the great revenge, to hide in the shelter of the silence and the mystery; acts entail further acts, and we become drawn into the mesh of human intricacies and partialities. But in the far quiet there is peace for the slain while the slayer wraps about himself the gray isolation of his acts, and out of his errors come the sufferings which are the birth-throes of new consciousness.

But that vengeance is foolish and a mere multi-

PARTISANSHIP

plication of wrongs does not mean that any brave man can get through life without partisanship at times. The world depends for growth and progress upon those who refuse to keep the peace where there is no peace, who cry aloud in the wilderness and the market-place, "Make straight the way of the Lord." They expose shams, proclaim dishonour, entrap the wicked, run risks and accept calamities; but to them, too, though the momentary voice invites confusion and disruption, to them we owe largely such peace and comfort and honour as have been built up. Without them the world would become marish and stagnant.

"Taking sides," exclaimed an enthusiastic young lady, "is the loveliest thing on earth; it makes life worth living." Certainly to live with zeal and enthusiasm is to live successfully; and to do so means that one must choose sides and throw the weight of one's personality into the balance—advance one end of life and thwart its opposite. But since this is so, what is the value of that religious attitude called quietism, indifferentism, of which we hear so much? Why is it that some great people of the world, men like Epictetus and Aurelius, walk in an atmosphere of large calm and serenity? Why is it that all the small turmoils and bustling disturbances of life seem to gather round and over-

THE HUMAN WAY

whelm little undecided folk? When one tries to answer these questions one is reminded of a youth who was baffled in his pursuit of the literary career, and who turned to a wise and philosophic old lady and asked, "Have you no sympathy with failure?" "Oh yes," she replied; "yes, I have sympathy with *large* failures." So it seems to be with partisanship—turmoils and disturbances and petty frettings and fumings attend small partisanship, but strength, peace, and wide outlook come from taking sides when the largeness of the cause justifies us. I am not denying the belittling effects of mere clanship, of standing by a friend, or even one's country, right or wrong. Family feeling is a most excellent arrangement of Providence for the comfort and strengthening of the individual, though in the last analysis it is really a further extension of egotism. Friendship founded on any lower basis than common pursuit of noble ends is only a little human adjustment for diversion and well-being. But who is a friend and a brother? Is it he who admires and upholds us, right or wrong, or is it he who will demand the best of us and have it at any cost?

Three ways there are that lead a man from the pernicious nagging of self-interest; three paths that make toward increasing the sum of the worth of

THE GREAT CAUSE

the world; three roads always worth finding and following: the disinterested and self-annulling pursuits of beauty, of virtue, and of truth.

That such pursuits sometimes err cannot detract from their worth. Any lost cause is a good enough one to die for if it be disinterestedly chosen; and if nothing else is gained, a man or a company of men have been relieved from the immediate pressure of the sense of self. Wherever a great cause mixes itself up with small matters and unessentials it loses force and power. Wherever narrow-mindedness and one-sidedness dictate the terms of party spirit, there the worth and nobility of the cause shrink. Savonarola would have been a greater reformer if he had not been afraid of jewels and pictures. Measure the difference between a partisanship such as Savonarola's and such an one as St. Francis's. St. Francis took sides, too. He sided against luxury and class distinction and wealth and political hierarchies, and he sided with mercy and pity and truth and love, and the brotherhood of the world; and he was so alive with the zeal of this partisanship that the small things, the unessentials, escaped him altogether.

If, to live effectively, one must decide on something one believes worth living and dying for, and then pursue the mark without abatement, one must

THE HUMAN WAY

choose a cause that will last, that can stand fire and water and even the clear light of eternity. That partisanship alone is worth while which fixes consciousness upon the good aimed at rather than the evil to overcome. If we find that we must stand through life with our heel set upon struggling wrong, at least we can put all our joy not in the tyrant beneath our foot, but in the hovering good toward which we look. Perhaps to be a partisan and yet to avoid unkindness is best accomplished by overlooking the evil we condemn, and advancing the counteracting virtue by every means in our power.

The philosophers who aimed at indifferentism, the saints who cultivated detachment, were not incapable of partisanship. They had only chosen their course wisely and learned to see grandly. He can best dare to be a partisan who has once felt his essential identity with all life, so that if he strangles or cuts off he may realise that it is a part of himself he slays. And if he dare to be a non-partisan too, and flow in the great current of the universal process, he must do so not lazily or vaguely, but with the sage's hard-won philosophy or the saint's wise detachment.

A hero of fiction, drawn in one of the most thoughtful and influential books of the last genera-

tion, had as his personal motto: *Tristem neminem fecit*. It may at a glance seem not the loftiest ideal. Perhaps it would be a nobler one to make many glad, but it stands for more of renouncement, of restraint, of self-immolation, than at first appears,—to move through the earth so gently, so cautiously, that no man may be the sadder for our presence.

It was not a philosopher but the housemaid who, upon being reproached for a certain slothful method of work, responded, "But all *really* good folks are a little lazy, aren't they?" And there was something to consider in that suggestion. Even the housemaid noted a certain "going softly" of those who have come to realise that all life is sanctified; a hesitancy in action, a considerateness in speech, a certain wistful attitude toward the spreading of effects once a thing is given concrete expression in the world. There are, indeed, in the indistinguishable mass of people, folk who are born with a rarer insight; the outcome, probably, of some great inherited regret religiously nursed, and used as a warning and as a restraint upon all swift impulse; there are folk who, as Hearn says, in one of his letters, "never did anything which was not—I will not say 'right,' that is commonplace—any single thing which was not *beautiful*." These souls who

THE HUMAN WAY

add to the gentle grace and shining softness of life are often overlooked, and are only distantly related to the good folk who organise charities and have cast-iron creeds to believe in and live by; such gentle, slow-moving souls are not eager, zealous or bustling; they often seem to have no particular end in view, and certainly are not making full tilt toward it; but as they go they sprinkle a few flowers along the way. They lighten a few burdens; they shed a little grace upon life, which is not, it is true, bread or meat, but is sometimes as sadly needed as these. For the little flowers of life are, after all, vital matters. It is something, of course, to be able to gather together the necessities for living and to live; something, too, to win out, to be aggressive enough to succeed; but though it is a quiet, hidden, shy thing that one must search in far corners to find, it is something, too, to go slowly and to note the fragile beauties by the way. A great many people cross the ocean every year, but comparatively few get up to see the sun spring up with a bound over the vast expanse of coloured water. Thousands of people motor through the cathedral towns of France in the summer, but only here and there is one who watches out the twilight in a lofty nave, sees darkness spread and engulf the vast enclosed space, and then hears the slow sham-

VELVET SOULS

ble of the verger as he moves about setting a light to a candle here and there before a saint's image, until finally the spot becomes in very deed "a dim, spacious, fragrant place afloat with lights." Such things as these are left for the "really good" people that the housemaid had in mind, who move slowly over the earth, stepping softly upon the very ground beneath them with a care "not to outrage its latent sensibilities." These are the people who understand most about suffering. They may not necessarily have gone through fiery furnaces themselves, but they have the vivid imagination which knows what another's hurt means; their eyes are far-seeing, and they refuse to turn away from the realisation of the actual ignominy and accompanying pain which are a part of life. Such souls bake no bread, it may be honestly confessed, but they hold to high standards with a grip that is grim and unshakable, and they refine life. It is to them we look for the unvarying beauty in human nature which makes life worth while, even when its sordid and hideous aspects are so noisy and so near as to make the game seem hardly worth the candle.

It was Pater's especial talent to depict over and over again this type of human being. Somewhere, passing slowly through the motley pageant of life, gentle-minded and silently observant of the gay

THE HUMAN WAY

and moving throng, he places a velvet soul, soft to contact, whose very religion is not hurting, who withdraws and renounces, who looks for twilight spaces in life, and who adds his silence to the great and soothing silence which lies beyond the bustle of life. These are heroes who walk through the world sustained by an awe not painful, but yet restraining, "generated by the habitual recognition, beside every circumstance and event of life, of its celestial correspondent."

Hearn was infinitely touched by just such velvet souls in Japan, since there are, by the nature of things, more of them there than in the West, where motion and haste are contagious. He writes of one: "The sweetest little woman, not seemingly of flesh and blood, but of silk embroidery mixed with soul," who was dying slowly, in great poverty and much pain, but who never complained, never broke down, never ceased to smile, never allowed the thought of her personal sorrow to invade her surroundings. He writes of a man, too, who, dying, said to his wife, "Open the windows wide, that my friend may see the chrysanthemums in the garden."

And, after all, the great thing to do for men in life is not to offer multiplied uses, but a rarer beauty. Modern civilisation, in its hurried scamper after comfort and material welfare, is over-apt to

THE RARE GIFT

forget this. It is not Robert Fulton, who invented the steamboat, whom we look back upon with yearning gratitude, but the man who painted a picture or who left a song in the world; it is he who caught some strange or rare aspect of life, some shifting light, or delicate sound, such as can be caught only by the still soul that waits and watches, and who gives them concrete form and prolonged existence; it is he who calls us to quiet recollection whom we know for the heavenly messenger.

A velvet soul in a family gives to life in that house a soft and shining texture, a still beauty without which family life means little more than combined interests. There was once a little girl who, from the time when she was first taken down among the big shops, was wont to make an effort to carry with her there a flower or flowers, and to leave them in the gloomiest or most crowded spot she entered. She was so little that it must have been almost unconsciously done, yet not only did it add to her own grace but it lent a new grace to the life about her. An old lady who died quite recently, an old lady who had nothing but herself and her gracious words to offer any one, had flowers sent to her through her last illness, not only by the housemaid who waited upon her, but by her dress-maker, and so one knew that she must have been,

THE HUMAN WAY

denuded as she was of all material gifts, a velvet soul who lent soft lights and gentle shadings, grace and richness, to whatever life she crossed. Such souls do not leave a clear, hard mark when they pass, but they leave echoes, haunting memories, after-thoughts—and always gentle ones.

One cannot imagine such souls without the occupations that fit their gentle slowness. Nearly all such tend flowers, are given to digging and planting and watching the earth for the little shoots to thrust up their heads. They love music and children and innocence. They know sky colours and coloured forms; they are not too busy to listen to bird-notes or watch the sparrows build. They may object to the regular Sunday services at church, but they haunt churches wherever they are, and whenever these are still and empty. And perhaps, when they pass on their way into the Great Beyond, they shall have absorbed as much of life and have added as much to the life they leave behind them as the greatest railroad magnate, the busiest inventor, or most bustling captain of industry of them all. For life is not made rich as it increases in motion and speed and heaped-up concrete objects, but as it increases in depth of significance, in beauty, and in closeness of relation to the whole of the universe.

LIFE MORE ABUNDANT

People who live long abroad always complain, when they come back to this country, that though we have the richest and most comfortable country in the world, life itself always seems meagre, made up of thin and gauzy and rather cheap materials. And the only possible reason is that more people in our land think of mean things, of wealth and advancement and material trappings, and pursue them with cruelty and inconsiderateness, and fewer people are left to pursue the things which outlast time, which are the looming reality behind little realities, beauty and truth and a pure intent. Where consciousness is centred on these things life takes on glow and colour and richness, apparently of its own accord. It becomes full without bustle, beautiful even when denuded, and, more vital still, it stretches out threads and feelers into the great cosmic pattern which has so little concern with riches and successes and is so deeply aware of beauty and truth.

Lives such as these come into the world with the power to smooth the way, to soften contact, to disentangle confusion, to make human intercourse lovely. Their ties are many and they last without loosening. Moreover, the same insight which leads them to "go softly" is apt to dictate wisdom in the choice of companions.

THE HUMAN WAY

There is a great deal in the *Sutta-Nipata* about the choosing of companions wisely:

"If one acquires a clever companion, an associate righteous and wise, let him, overcoming all dangers, wander about with him glad and thoughtful.

"If one does not acquire a clever companion, an associate righteous and wise, then as a king abandoning a conquered kingdom (natural desire?) let him wander alone like a rhinoceros.

"Thus if I join myself with another" (it continues naively), "I shall swear or scold; considering this danger, let me wander alone like a rhinoceros."

To carry with one through life the burden of many profound relations would require a very torrent of emotion, if we would not be broad at the expense of being shallow, and it doubtless would be an expenditure upon the many of what should belong to the few. Fidelity must not be a mere stubborn shutting of the eyes because we have submitted to the fate of man and lost, and a refusal to accept the new and different. It may verily be that when the half-gods go, the gods arrive. Life, by the nature of it, is a passing away, and that which belongs to us one day is gone the next, and only from the profounder depths of our being do we choose to hold that which has gone from us in the continuous life of the soul.

CHOICE OF RELATIONS

But there is a familiarity, a comfort, a sweetness about that which has always been ours, always belonged to us, hard for the new and strange to usurp. It was this longing for the familiar which saddened and overwhelmed Lafcadio Hearn so often in those last years in Japan, when he longed for some one who had always known and understood him. "One's best friends have a certain far-offness about them," writes this brave but mutilated exile to his home, "even when breaking their backs to please you. There's no such thing as clapping a man on the back and saying 'Hello, old boy!' There's no such thing as slapping a fellow on the knee or chucking a fellow under the rib. All such familiarities are terribly vulgar in Japan. So each one has to tickle his own soul and clap it on the back and say, 'Hello!' to it. And the soul, being Western, says: 'Do you expect me always to stay in this extraordinary country? I want to go home, or get back to the West Indies at least. Hurry up and save some money.'"

It is easy to understand this homesickness for familiarity, for letting loose the bonds and looking into another's sympathy and good-will and understanding which, now and again, overcame that singular and isolated soul, cut off from humanity as he was, as much by his unassuageable thirst for

THE HUMAN WAY

beauty and high truths as by his expatriation. But one need not travel to far Japan to know that sudden, overwhelming homesickness, that longing to have some one clap us on the back who has known us from infancy. Whoever spends his maturity in an alien setting may find himself at any unexpected moment suddenly facing his own homesickness in a strange world, where all men look at him through a veil of unfamiliarity. Life itself grows unfamiliar to us as we grow older. There is no more of the easy knitting-up of the affections once childhood is past. The very purpose of the life apart, the very weight of care and responsibility and separate interests, cut one off from the old relations, and it is difficult to clap any one on the back very heartily who has only known us since we have been old and tired. The close relationships must begin in youth, and a man should be careful lest the young, expansive years should escape him without those ties which mean life—for with age comes inevitably a certain shrinking from self-expression, a kind of shame at baring the self to another. It is a neoplatonic sense of reproach at our own embodiment and limitation, and we take refuge in impersonality in talk and expression. It has become sufficient to the grown soul to keep its secrets to itself in silence. Again, the very

FAMILIARITY

sight of the glut of human existence has taught us that our only usefulness is in being strong to listen, pure of self-concern to offer aid, and calm to weigh judgment; in being one who, having lived in inward silence, has robbed the fire of heaven of some heat to warm the shivering souls who linger on the threshold.

The genius, at any rate, is likely to offer his soul from time to time a little rest from reality; to say to his soul: "Let it all go. What is it worth? Let life, if it be so persistent, flow on, but you step aside a little; fold your hands, cease grasping at floating straws, and stretch yourself, and take your ease just for an hour and dream of another and a better world. Dreams, after all, are the best of life." Is it not in these, indeed, that the old familiarities are fraught with sweetness and significance? Who is truly grateful for good-will at the moment when it claps him? No; it is through a mist of memory, when all is said, that one knows the real values of life. He is a lucky fellow, too, even if he starve, who knows how, from time to time, to push open the door of dreams and walk through the scented moonlit gardens no hand has planted, where along the paths great tall flowers grow—flowers like white poppies, but sweet as the rose and the clove pink and the mignonette, diaphanous and swift to catch

THE HUMAN WAY

each sigh of the breeze and bend with it to the glistening grasses. There, too, all paths lead to a shimmering lake, silver-topped and bared to the moon, and the music in the garden is distant and half-hushed, but it never ceases; it sounds like a nightingale ready to die, or a violin so old that a full note would break it, or like the song a child makes who has known his first sorrow, and it hovers ever on the edge of that pain which is almost pleasure, and that pleasure which is wholly pain.

After such a rest as that, one might indeed clap one's soul on the back again and say, "Hello, old fellow! Awake, and back again so soon, and eager to invent a new world of solid facts to rise up and hit you when you least expect it!" Well, freshness and vigour and the desire to fight and overcome must count for something, too, in the long adventure. But it will need all the familiarity, all the cordial cheer a man can muster, to wake out of the lotos-dream and go back into the heaven and hell of work and punishment and reward and disappointment and separateness; and he is luckiest who shall be greeted on the threshold of his new struggle by a smile once known and a clap on the shoulder and a voice much loved and long lost, saying, "Hello, old boy!"

There are other faiths to keep warm through life,

FAITH WITH THE DEAD

faiths that beckon us still when all the old familiarities are dead. Who is willing to

“Break faith with those whom he has laid
In earth’s dark chambers?”

Perhaps only the most scrupulous, most exquisitely perceptive minds can thus keep the dead and the absent alive and with him, according them all the influence and participation in life that would belong to the bodily presence, the living voice. But just because the cult of the absent makes the more difficult demand, its reward is the greater. There is a profounder peace, a more complete harmony, resultant from the loneliness braved and the difficulties overcome. We have the joy of a creative act in the thought that we have practically endowed with life one who, but for our willing effort, would be lifeless; given a voice to one otherwise dumb. There is a great poetic reward in this cult of remembrance, and it is difficult not to believe that even the dead feel an increase of life in the ceremonies of remembrance given to them—how much more surely do they live when we allow the thought of them to underlie our every perception, our griefs and our joys, receiving the gifts of life not for ourselves alone, but in the spirit of the absent.

VI

THE AREA OF THE PERSONALITY

IN looking at successful and unsuccessful lives, what mainly impresses us is the fact that the successful life covers more ground. Its works last longer and effect more. The successful personality is the personality whose sympathies have spread wide and whose insight has guessed the hidden springs of blessed activities. The mind of wide area is not hemmed in too much by fear of space; it is not appalled or alienated by strangers and distance, but carries with it a power of expansion wherever it goes. It even moves further and feels its way into the unplummeted depths of the unseen, and carries on in that mysterious realm the same barter of give and take that it extends around the world; it offers sympathetic recognition, and the powers of the unfathomable seem in turn to range themselves on its side.

The first gift of such a nature is imagination, and imagination requires a soil from which the

EXPANSION

weed of self has been torn up by the roots. The very beginning of the imaginative life is a pushing away of the immediate. The demands of the personal are exorbitant and narrowing, and the heart must form the habit of wide and leisurely ranging before the bonds of the body are broken and the soul can stretch itself.

But this expansion does not mean escape from all sorrow. Sorrow is inseparable from life as we know it. But there are two kinds in the world: universal and personal sorrow. Few people ever attain to the first—grief for the world as it is, for its inevitable contradictions, for the weary stretch of sin and mistakes ahead, for the antagonisms which seem to be its form of life—so that the very signification of light is the absence of dark, and of good, is the subjugation of evil. But those who learn such sorrow must first have laid themselves and their personal woes aside and have escaped their limitations; for to submit to them is to see the universe divided into sections and the world shut in by narrow walls. This is deplorable just because it is so little, so intense; because it mourns the frustration of such small desires, such scant losses, such meagre futilities. Do we cease to see the sunlight because our beloved is withdrawn, and is the glory of spring dimmed because our wishes are

THE HUMAN WAY

thwarted? This is shutting the soul's eyes until they do not see beyond the personal fate.

There is a very suggestive engraving of William Blake's, labelled: "I Want." In it, upon a little bit of level land jutting into the sea, stands a speck of a man at the foot of a ladder. The ladder reaches up higher than the distant hills, beyond a crescent moon, and dwindles into a faint line among the stars. The man, with one foot on the lowest round, grasps the ladder with both hands and looks up, while two other specks of mortality, a man and a woman, with arms linked together and with backs turned to the ladder, seem to be wandering toward the rolling hills and peaceful vales of the background. The way of the ladder, though it end in the stars, looks wearisome, perilous, and lonely. There is no suggestion of companionship or of resting-place. The valleys with their running brooklets, the trees with their nesting birds, even the highest rocky hills, will soon be lost from sight, and there will be only the solitary monotonous climbing between two worlds.

The whimsical, petulant, noble-spirited and wholly delightful letters of Mr. Ruskin have been quite full of the sorrows of the man who props his desire against the stars. "I am tormented," he writes, "by what I cannot get said nor done. I

want to get all the Titians, Tintorets, Paul Veroneses, Turners, and Sir Joshuas in the world into one great, fire-proof, Gothic gallery of marble and serpentine. I want to get them all perfectly engraved. I want to go and draw all the subjects of Turner's nineteen hundred sketches in Switzerland and Italy, elaborated by myself. I want to get everybody a dinner who hasn't one. I want to macadamise some new roads to heaven with broken fools' heads; and I want to hang up some knaves out of the way—not that I've any dislike of them, but I think it would be wholesome for them and for other people, and that they would make good crows' meat. I want to play all day long and arrange my cabinet with new white wool. I want something to amuse me when I am tired. I want Turner's pictures not to fade. I want to be able to draw clouds and to understand how they go—and I can't make them stand still nor understand them—they all go sideways. Further, I want to make the Italians industrious, the Americans quiet, the Swiss romantic, the Roman Catholics rational, and the English Parliament honest—and I can't do anything and I don't understand why I was born.”

We all more or less know the difficulty of allowing the Creator to fan the clouds His own way.

THE HUMAN WAY

We have all more or less vehemently questioned why we were born, since, with all the will in the world to reform the universe, the most we can do is to order some household, to add to some little child's happiness, or amuse a neighbour. Barring the achievement of a half-dozen great reformers, a few poets, one or two discoverers, no man's work amounts to much. The mills of God grind slow; the machinery is enormous—too big for any human eyes to see in its entirety; each man is but a peg or a screw in the right place. To live cheerfully on the face of the planet requires many virtues, and insight enough to know one's place and accept it, not in the least in the spirit of Carlyle, who responded sardonically to Margaret Fuller's exuberant, "I accept the universe," with, "Gad! she'd better!" but with Kipling's vim:

"For to admire and for to see,
For to be'old this world so wide!"

The fact is, mortals are put under a discipline of accomplishment through doing small things faithfully. Ruskin did not elaborate Turner's nineteen hundred sketches, but by dint of patient and reiterated talking and writing about Turner, by pointing out and explaining his excellences, he taught masses of blind people to see what other-

LIFE'S LITTLE THINGS

wise had been hid from them. No one man reforms the prison system, but each man who takes it seriously to heart affects somebody else and prepares a soil into which a seed may some day drop.

The finest achievements are compact of patience, fidelity, tolerance, with some stray gleams of intelligence, insight, or genius. To cry for the Pleiades and listen to the clamour of undisciplined desires paralyses the will, and a more cheerful occupation is to be busy laying the blocks that are at hand. The great astronomer is not the man who sits on a hill with a telescope and yearns for the stars; he is concerned with minute and detailed calculations on a slip of paper. Even Blake's little mortal will not be able to skip a rung of his ladder. He will have to keep his eyes fixed steadily one step ahead and no more, and move up round by round, or he will grow giddy and fall. He must gird his loins and take account of his losses and do the best he can with the material at hand. For to attempt to fling aside all the small things and aim only at the great brings us into strange contradictions of thought.

"Which is better," wrote the lonely lady, who lived with her own thoughts in the "Little-House-in-the-Woods," to me—"which is better, the daily duty done or duty sacrificed for the career?"

THE HUMAN WAY

For an instant, the question was so puzzling that I turned instinctively to the dictionary, to find out what this great thing called "career" was, for which we were to sacrifice duty. Career, then, according to Nuttall, is "the time of service, the race, the general course of action." This helps one to see what the question means. A career is simply a series of duties faithfully done, and a wasted life is a life where duties are undone. People very often like to add an unreal glitter to a word, a sham polish which is not real gold, and then they become dazzled and confused. The word "career" applies as justly to the housemaid as it does to Paderewski, and if one kind of work is perhaps a little less delightful, a little more arduous and exacting than the other, that may be the greater career because it calls out the greater moral qualities.

"Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and th' action fine,"

warned the seventeenth-century poet, and we are still trying to absorb the simple truth that it is not the thing we do but the way we do it that counts.

One comes slowly at any of the real meanings of life; but just as

"All the springs are flashlights of one spring,"

IN THE SAME BOX

so all the duties are but samples of the great archetypal Duty, and our question is not which duty falls to us, but how we meet the one that comes.

It is by way of being the fashion nowadays to think that only noise is valuable; that a name bandied about in print and sounded in many mouths is noble. We are inclined to honour money first, and after that the power of becoming well-known. But if one dare whisper a secret aloud, they are rather vulgar qualities that make for these attainments, and rather vulgar rewards that are earned. If only one could honestly believe that, it would be so helpful! It is a higher stage of development, of course, that admires and yearns for real intellectual power, but even that is less to be desired than faithful service in whatever tasks we are called to do.

There is one more aspect in the praise of life's little things. They are a great refuge. There come times to us all of sorrow and of shame and of awful questionings; times when we moan and weep and wring our hands and stare past the blind skies and wonder why we are tortured. And then soothing and quiet lie for us in life's little things, the small, immediate tasks. Let a man have the leisure or the shock that sets him for days together in the realm of the awful uncertainties, the great

THE HUMAN WAY

questionings of whence and whither; let him live for a while conscious only that,

“His speech is a burning fire,
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death,”

and he will know how to value the refuge of life's small necessities, the little things that hem him in and reconcile him to the moment, the present day and its needs.

And, indeed, when all is said and done, we are all of us in the same box—we are all in the same box, and the six sides of it are Death and Sorrow, Mutability and Decay, Search and Finality; and we are all of us jostling up against one another and getting in one another's way and hitting one another, or going off to the far corner and feeling lonesome and wishing some one would only take us for granted and like us, or remember us and give us a holiday—and, perhaps, too, perhaps, there are outlets to the box; we do not know surely, but since none can positively deny us, we can still hope there are outlets to the big box of mortality we call life, and the names may be Hope and Courage, Patience and Trust, Love and Wisdom. And when we pursue these without let and without faintness

THE GREAT CAREER

of heart, we are in very deed making our career, running the race, accepting the given course of action, and fulfilling the time of service.

For there are no answers to the questions whence we came, and whither in all eternity we are bound, or why we ever found ourselves here, but as we stand at this very instant there are little turnings for better and for worse, and the better is invariably the duty done, and the worse is always the turning aside from the given task and choosing a glittering, false ideal which we name "career."

One of the great difficulties of life is that we are so apt to see our present moment in a false light, unless love or religion or the wisdom of piety somehow shed a true light on it. Let any man reflect upon the emotion with which he met a given moment, and the emotion with which he reflected upon it ten or twenty years later. How often the suffering, the loneliness—aye, the awful tragedy itself—were but the way of the deepening consciousness, the path of learning; while the gaiety, the merriment, the gratified desire, will prove the futile, wasted time, or at best the season of mere vegetation. If only we could pluck the fruits of experience and taste them at the right moment, with what a bold face and high courage we might face our fate! For it is not what happens to us,

THE HUMAN WAY

after all, that matters; it is the thoughts with which we decorate what happens. Suffering, even the seemingly unvital and unmeaning suffering of sheer dulness and loneliness, is often in retrospect the most beautiful and most worthy of our experiences. Those moments in which we stoically bore our pain and dejectedly but determinedly fulfilled our daily tasks, those were the moments that were worth while, when fulness of being, which is the meaning of life, was added unto us. When one can, it is well to stop and realise that this world of shows about us is but the sister-world of truth, where, as in a mirror darkly, we see the shadows of reality pass.

Therefore, the questionings of the lonely lady in the "Little-House-in-the-Woods" are but the type of the questions we are all daily setting ourselves, and the answer is that it is not the butter, but the recurrent duty of churning it, that is the eternal reality; for, as we all know too well, our products belong to a fleeting world, and it is only by continuous recreating that we keep this physical world in existence at all; but the fidelity, the truth, the honour of our minds as we work, these belong to the eternal verities.

And for the sake of the lonely and the somewhat bored and sad people who dream that a closer touch

CHOICE

with activities and so-called life and thought would solve their problem, let it be said that what the world needs more than anything else to-day, when communication is so easy and so diverting, where so many people are swept away by the mere current of general opinion, are those lonely people who have little outside to divert them, and who are, therefore, looking into themselves and listening to the eternal truths voiced there. "Who listens to the Eternal Voice is delivered from many an opinion," wrote that sage of the spiritual life long ago, who himself chose loneliness and austerity, and made out of it a book to console and uplift the ages.

But to choose duty, even that near at hand, is still choice, and choosing, choosing constantly and day by day, is the enlargement of character. One of the most interesting Raphaels in the National Gallery is a tiny drawing of *The Knight's Vision*. Hardly larger than a sheet of foolscap paper, it has many of the qualities, in all their pristine loveliness and radiancy, that we have learned to look for in the earlier and finer Raphaels. On the ground lies the knight asleep; near him stand two women, the one offering a flower, the other a book, while in the background one sees an adorable little Italian landscape, such as is half the charm

THE HUMAN WAY

of the old pictures. The flower or the book, the primrose path of dalliance or stern wisdom, the tale of this choice runs through all our history. Of Herakles the same tale is told. Meditating in a solitary place, alone, what use to put his marvellous strength to, two women appear to him—Vice and Virtue, each representing the advantages to be gained by choosing herself. It is over easy to forget how completely life is at all points a matter of choice, a daily—nay, an hourly—renewing of choice. Which shall it be—a definitely directed will or an easy drifting with the current? We decide it when we open our eyes on the daylight every morning. Life undirected, life that is not held taut to an ideal, an object ever a bit beyond the grasp, is the life that becomes a bore, that slackens hold on all things and drops wearily into whatever channel is near and runs its course to the end.

Burne-Jones resented somewhat Carlyle's preaching about doing the duty nearest at hand, because it seemed to limit the field of choice. It is not necessarily virtue to do the *nearest* duty; it is the behest of virtue, after all, that a man choose the highest duty conceivable for himself, and then, having chosen, that he pursue it to the end as a lover his mistress or as a hawk its prey. For life is, in its essence, choice. If a man be unwise

THE HIGHEST DUTY

enough to choose the path of dalliance, so much the worse for him. If a man be timid enough to choose mere conformity, he may thereby escape much pain, but he likewise debars himself from all the highest joys, the more bounding exaltations.

“Take your own way and never change it,” Burne-Jones writes to his boy Philip at school. “Only that way will you win, either now or afterward, in life. It will always be so, dear; there will always be people telling you how to think and act and dress, and what you are to say and how you are to live, down to the tiniest trifle, meaning that you are to think and act and dress as they do, and some sort of penalty you are to pay for differing from them—get away from it, body and mind,” he advises the boy. It was good advice and cannot be too often repeated. Choose what you want; look at life curiously, for it is a marvellously rich fairyland of desirable things; look long and reverently and choose what thing, of all the things to be had upon earth, you will have for your own, and, having chosen, pursue it, for it is this pursuit of the worthy object that strengthens the sinews and keeps the heart’s pulses high and the zest of living keen. Burne-Jones had himself made a difficult choice. He had been educated to take orders, and when the time came a new and a different

THE HUMAN WAY

vision of beauty had usurped his heart, a service to man through multiplying the visible, lovely forms of earth, and the pain of the moral and mental struggle was intense for a year or two; but, once the choice made, he never regretted it. It was a real choice. Once he entered into his profession, he moved steadily on toward the goal, never wearying of work. He never understood the restless people who wanted a change, and who wanted to get away from their work. "I'd like to stay right here in this house," he said, "for numberless years." The getting on with one's work was enough happiness, and beyond him lay ever more and more visions of loveliness to be embodied. With mere conformity for comfort's sake he had no patience, and his advice to his boy was ever that he should make his choice and yield to no persuasions of others. Of these, the persuasions and solicitations of others to do and to be as they are, he writes again: "Think as little of that side of life as you can—at the worst, it is like the teasing of flies on a summer's day—and there is left to think of sun and moon and seasons and earth and seas and monuments and images, and the lives of the great; all these may be your life if you will." That is a very lovely list of things to make a personality with — sun and moon and seasons and

THE FOOL'S LAUGHTER

earth and seas and monuments and images and the lives of the great; and the choice whether one will fill the flying moments with these or with dust and disorder and gossip and petty interest in meanesses and bonnets and little conformities is a living and recurrent issue. Does it matter that if one choose the larger way the fools must laugh? There is an old Welsh triad of the laugh of fools. It says: "The fool laughs at a thing because it is good; he laughs at a thing because it is bad; and he laughs at a thing because he cannot understand it." The fool always laughs at a great man because he sees only the discomforts and deprivations of the great man's choice, and he knows nothing of the exaltations and great joys of pursuit and the hopes of service.

Moreover, choice is formative and upbuilding. Success is as often as not weakening and discomposing. Failure, so long as the soul never gives in, but uses each incompleteness as the base of a new start and a higher effort, does not hurt; but an ignoble choice, a slight standard, leave their mark upon the soul for all life. Life is the upward struggle, not attainment, but stepping forward, little by little. "Hitch your wagon to a star," for who hitches to an ox will not get far out of the highway, and,

THE HUMAN WAY

“Whichever way the highways tend,
Be sure there’s nothing at the end.”

There is more experience and knowledge to be gotten out of a smash-up with a star than in all the jog-trotting along the main-travelled roads of a whole life. On the whole, courage is the first and last virtue; courage to attempt, to endure rebuff, to begin again and again.

Not only the one great choice what one shall do with a life and make of the little soul encased in one’s flesh counts; but the days, one after another,

“Muffled and dumb, like barefoot dervishes,”

come offering us new choices, spreading before us “diadems and fagots, bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all,” and daily we choose among them that which best fits the desire of the soul.

But, above all, we must choose work. No personality is built on idle drifting. “Thou, O God, dost sell us all good things at the price of labour,” jotted down that tremendous worker Leonardo in his note-book. Himself a writer, a philosopher, a sculptor, an engineer, an inventor, and a great painter, he might well know the worth of his own saying, for even to genius rewards come as the

THE PRICE WE PAY

response to work. Indeed, genius is likely to be a large capacity for drudgery and a great enjoyment of process. A lady fluttered up to an eminent violinist after his performance and said, "I would give half my life to be able to do that."

"That, madam," he replied, "is exactly what *I* have given to do it."

There is no doubt that we pay for all we get in life, but a great many of us drift in a half-hearted, unthinking way to getting and paying only when we must, and then unwillingly. It would be vastly more advantageous to think out our problem beforehand, to decide what things we really must have in life, and just what we are willing to give for them: how much effort, how much drudgery, how much renouncement. Of course the incurably childish mind will cling to a wavering doubt that it may somehow eat its cake and have it too—get the rewards of labour and escape making the payments; but most of us who believe in any law of cause and result will sooner or later settle to some sort of rough calculation as to what we want to pay, and pare our purchases accordingly. But if we do not, we also pay for making no decision, and few things, in the end, come higher than drifting through life trusting somehow that bills will never come due. We pay for drifting and we pay for

THE HUMAN WAY

living; we pay for liberty, for unconventionality; we pay a pretty price for conventionality and uniformity; we pay for our habits and we pay for having none; we pay for joy and we pay for grief; we pay for our doubts and we pay higher for our faiths.

The truth is, life and its fruits are not presented to us now, a free gift, as they were to Adam, but living and all its prizes are dangled before us, a little out of reach, while the Sibylline voice sounds out from the darkness beyond, saying: "Here, my little man; here is life, and here all the fruits of life. Come, find out the prices and buy." And it is quite useless to try to snatch and run. The attempt never succeeds. We are always caught and the worth of the goods gotten from us, and a heavy interest extorted, too, as a punishment for trying to escape. A great deal of modern education is an attempt to snatch the goods without paying the price, and the results are sadly defeated. It is just as well to let a child know ever so early in life that it costs a good deal of effort and a patient renewal of effort day after day to win the great delights of reading. It costs, for example, not a little to be ordinarily well educated; it costs infinitely more to become an accomplished humanist; it costs in effort and in renunciations to be a specialist.

THE COST OF INDIVIDUALITY

We pay for our conventionality and conformity by a good deal of self-suppression and by becoming so painfully like sheep in appearance and intellect; and if we elect the opposite course and decide to develop individuality regardless of costs, we pay often in loss of friends and approval; we accept a good deal of misunderstanding and ill-will, and sometimes rudeness, and the heavy responsibility of finally producing and making good the individuality bought at so noticeable a cost. The latter is the more expensive article, undoubtedly, and if we have chosen to buy it we must somehow scrape together the purchase money. The eighteenth century in English literature, for example, took propriety and conformity to its gods; it paid a small price, as was right, for so slim an experience of life. The nineteenth century broke away, demanded fulness of being and of knowledge and heightened significance, and it paid, in great destructions, doubts, uncertainties, anguish, mental and spiritual darkness, for the fuller flood of light that was to follow. How boldly, how undauntedly they accepted the bleakest of pessimisms rather than juggle with their facts! How they sang:

“L’infinità vanità del tutto,”

THE HUMAN WAY

and emphasised,

“The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies.”

How they pointed out the nothingness and futility of mankind, so that any one seeing his ego in its real nakedness would turn and run, and each one even to bear his own existence “must bedeck himself with the rags of a stage costume and hold the masks of joy and love before his face in order to add to the interest of his appearance.” This was a heavy price to pay for the more truthful and rational sense of life’s values that grew thence. But who would say the results shamed the suffering? It were a cowardly thing indeed to buy great treasures and then weep and lament over the money we had spent.

We pay for our affections; we pay in the selfish, perhaps, but instinctive desire to win love where we love; we pay in fear of loss; we pay in the increase of our sufferings by all those of others whom we love as ourselves, and whose sufferings we therefore realise as we do our own. We pay; but, after all, “passion, like wisdom, is justified of all her children.” None who have known them would be willing to forego the affections for a self-centred immunity and security.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

It is likewise a costly matter to indulge in freedom of speech. Utterance always brings momentary relief. Indeed, young and enthusiastic people find it almost impossible to exist without an occasional unloading of the mind and heart. But to say what you want to say just when and as you want to say it, is a right for which you often pay too dear. It is a costly privilege and the benefits derived are apt to dwindle in value as the hours pass and the burning moment wanes. We pay for all our little indiscretions and impulsive, impatient moments. Leonardo again says: "Patience serves against insult as clothes do against cold, since, if you multiply your clothes, cold cannot hurt you. Similarly, let thy patience increase under great offences and they will not be able to hurt your feelings." Indeed, it is a point to lay to heart that the greatest freedom is self-restraint.

We pay for our doubts with much darkness and uncertainty; we pay for our faiths with infinite courage and trust, often in the teeth of calamity and the face of destruction. We pay for our high ideals with great loneliness. We pay for life itself in much effort to sustain it, in greater effort to train it into worthy channels, in unremitting effort to keep it there. We pay for our inevitable sorrows and losses and errors sometimes with anger and

THE HUMAN WAY

denunciation, sometimes with feeble complaining and prostration, sometimes with endurance and stoic quiet, or best with tender and hopeful resignation; but whatever coin we give, we know at least that nothing is got for nothing. A complete and resigned outlook upon life is a purchase which must necessarily cost a round sum; a long and careful training, even perhaps a long line of godly ancestors.

Who choose the great ideals and the high emotions must be ready with payment of the more poignant agonies and greater dangers. But the great point is to know what we want to buy, and, secondly, whether or not we are willing to pay the price.

There are people who have chosen a rôle or accepted a temperament, and who are determined to abide by its limitations, but they do not escape their debt.

There is a charming little tale of Ruth McEnery Stuart's about an old darky who was "marked for rest," and who met the whole of life seated in a comfortable rocking-chair, while his wife, awed by this deliberate expression of the will of Destiny, cheerfully supported him and his six children. This cult of being "marked for" the line of least resistance has had a period of excessive power and

THE PUSH OF THE UNIVERSE

éclat since the laws of heredity have been popularised and given to the masses, and the gift has proved a delightful one for those desiring above all accomplishments and all achievements to take rest in this life. To say a quality has been inherited has been almost as conclusive to the half-educated as to say a man, bound hand and foot, cannot move. But qualities are no more inherited than are accomplishments. Tendencies are inherited, and even these are no more necessarily bound to become habits than environment is bound to be conformed to. A son does not always follow the ancestral vocation, or practise the ancestral virtues, and if these are not binding, surely the ancestral vices are no more so. Ibsen's *Ghosts* has frequently been taken as a thesis proving that heredity is not to be circumvented, whereas *Ghosts* is a tract on telling the truth and not on heredity at all. Ibsen was bent on having people face facts and act according to their true nature, and he spent his energies showing that wherever we idealise facts away, we meet disaster. The tragedy of *Ghosts* lay not in the fact that Oswald's heredity was fatal, but that his mother's lies had prevented his reviewing the facts and applying remedies. Here we come to the greatest fact to be taken into account in the whole matter of accepting hereditary tem-

THE HUMAN WAY

perament: if life is full of poisons, so also is it full of antidotes. The world-will is indeed without us, but it is also within. The universe pushes against us, and, in the end, will surely overthrow our bodies and we shall lay them down to make some spot of earth greener and more fertile, but so long as the life-breath is in us, the world-will is within as well as without. So long as we breathe we can react against the push of the universe. To be sure, men react in different degrees, and the genius pushes back against the universe harder than the jelly-fish, but the point is, that so long as a creature is alive he can react. He is never necessarily a slave to any inheritance or any environment. If we pin our faith to fate we have as much right to believe in fatal courage as in fatal cowardice, in fatal power of mind to conquer stuffs less living and less alert, in fatal victory of wisdom over destiny.

But to attain the better fatalities, the personality must be unified, must consciously face and come to know the facts outside itself, must wilfully react upon them. The first manifestation of weakness is the scattered, disintegrated personality, the mind not quite sure of itself or of what it wants. Anger, grief, passion, appetite, caprice, rage disintegrate, and leave their victim powerless. In Blake's *Mad Song* a supreme touch of genius lies in the lines:

THOUGHTS CREATE

"Like a fiend in a cloud
After night I do *crowd*."

And not the exigencies of rhyme brought in that word *crowd*, but the sudden vision of a personality broken, scattered, a prey to lawless, multitudinous instincts.

So when we ask, How shall a man escape his ancestry? the answer comes: By building up a well unified character, by establishing a personality, controlled and well leashed in by a dominating faculty, and by training the mind to face facts squarely and honestly, and to call them by their right names. If we were to delude ourselves into believing that the world-will were not outside us as well as within, we might swiftly fall, but if it is outside as well as within, the remedy is to stand up, gird our loins, and push.

The first power we have to deal with is that of thoughts. Our thoughts have to be directed against obstacles, and thoughts are not hereditary, though a tendency toward a certain form of thinking may be. Our thoughts, in the main, are such as we make shift to gather together, to evolve out of our experiences, our failures and successes; our thoughts adapt themselves to whirling circumstance, and, except in the deadest of cases,

THE HUMAN WAY

the son does not think what the father thought. By obeying our thoughts, we try their power, we measure their force against the encroaching forces of the world. "The event," said a philosopher, "is the actualisation of thought." Think any one thought often enough and then see how it comes true. It was Goethe who said, with a certain weariness, "What we wish for in youth heaps itself over us in age"; and Emerson, "All prayers come true; therefore be very careful what you pray for." Willing comes true, wishes beget facts, and thoughts create visible objects.

To train a child, therefore, to think and to will, is to train him to take his inheritance into his hands and bend it into such shape as he wants. The beginning of illumination is analysis. To teach one person to look at facts and call them by the right names is the best of education and prepares him to cope with destiny. It must have been Emerson, believing as he did in a wind of destiny which blew ever toward the necessary and the right, who suggested that if we could but throw in our desires to run the same course with the stars in their orbits, we could harness these heavenly forces to our purposes. But go in a cross current and you run the risk of being crushed every minute. The way of the stars, according to that,

CROWNED WITH THE STARS

would be the way of right and necessity, but the danger would come in any man's fancying that the wishes and opinions of the masses were the forces of the universe. The masses are the units waiting a leader to unify them, and the opinion of the majority is, by the very nature of it, wrong. That opinion is wrong which in the presence of a possible higher accepts the lower view, and whatever view is popularised till it meets the understanding of the great majority is necessarily on a low level. It was something quite different that Emerson meant when he suggested that we harness the stars to pull our purposes. Doubtless he meant just what Traherne meant when he wrote in his meditations: "You will never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars."

Such enjoyment as this it was that gave Whitman his strength, that left Blake, after a life of hardship, labour, mischance, abuse and ill success, singing upon his death-bed, so full was he of serenity and peace and sense of good work done,—so that he literally sang himself from the bed of earthly failure into the arms of death. "But I know he was cheered at the throne," as the poet did not say, but should have said. This is to conquer destiny by wilfully identifying one's self with all the vic-

THE HUMAN WAY

torious, healing processes of life, and who does this is the victor.

And those who are doomed to suffer bodily ills and incapacities have but a wider field to traverse, a more numerous enemy to overcome, a bigger victory to record. They at least can always suffer to good purpose, can always build up a sublime thought, or a fine disposition, or an unlimited sympathy out of what, at first glance, might seem a disadvantage.

"The more trouble, the more lion; that's my principle," said Emerson's washerwoman to him; and as one walks about looking into the faces of one's fellow-citizens, one wonders if it is not, after all, the thought of facing trouble that has drawn the most decisive lines in their faces. It seems a pity that we should waste good life so instead of enjoying the enjoyable things, like breathing and looking round and liking one's fellows. One questions whether this conviction of the hostility of life is well grounded, and whether the attitude of worry, of preparing for the worst, is really necessary. If one could only accept the reverses as a sort of poison—kerosene emulsion or Bordeaux mixture—administered to the plant to destroy the devouring worm and make the blossoms more perfect, one would perhaps meet them with less

DROPPING BURDENS

wearing anxiety and in a more pliant attitude. Life is too beautiful and, so far as we are assured, too rare an occurrence to spend it all, tensely drawn up, facing our sorrows and our deprivations. And as Epictetus said, "It is a shame for the soul to give out before the body."

Great men, the saints and the geniuses, somehow always escape worry. They fling the private burdens on the shoulders of Destiny with an inward conviction of Destiny's ultimately beneficent intents; and perhaps, too, they are born realising how small a dot a life is in a soul's career. One thing is certain, that the great interests and the nobler pursuits are the surest relief from fretting care and nerve-racking anxieties.

After all, such is our impuissance in all the major matters of life that the very beginning of wisdom is the flinging aside of the burden and living the moment through for what it is worth in itself, leaving the future to a more capable hand. Planning occasionally helps us to seize an opportunity, but worrying never does anything but eat up vitality and power. Some training in faith is required to take to-morrow's dinner on trust, and yet how slight a turn in the screw can change a destiny, and how little our own hand has to do with the turning.

THE HUMAN WAY

A depressed and industrious gardener, grubbing for a bed of killing worms among some clove-pink roots, was startled by a low voice close to his elbow: "Any work I can get to do?" And out of his depression and faint-heartedness, from a consciousness where there seemed to be no work for anybody to do or room in the world for any one to live, he answered, harshly: "No, nothing at all." Glancing up, he saw a strange, muscular twitch around the mouth of the beggar who turned off; and, noting it, he became aware of a tattered, sickly boy, with the look of endurance at last ebb, and the helpless child-nature near to the birth again. So the gardener jumped up and called the boy back, and listened again to the old story of works unexpectedly shut down in a distant manufacturing town, of a week's tramp accompanied by every possible deprivation—a mission cot free for three nights while a job was hunted, the time up and neither job nor money forthcoming. "When did you eat last?" the gardener asked, staring. "Day before yesterday." And self-pity won the day, and the mouth twitched again, and tears made muddy tracks down the boy's brown cheeks. The gardener had his own worries, not matters of dinners, exactly, but things as vital; and as he sat, later, watching the friendless creature, clean

THE AFFECTIONS

and clothed and rested, fed and encouraged, it suddenly came over him that the whole change wrought in the face of the lad's universe came not from his powers of persuasion, nor yet his abilities, nor the gardener's sympathies and good intentions, but merely from an uncontrolled muscle round the boy's mouth—a muscle that twitched when he could no longer speak.

Perhaps, with our destiny ever dangling on so fine a thread, there is something in letting life take care of itself at times, living out the moment for all it is worth, doing our best at the immediate juncture, and flinging the burden of the distant to-morrows upon more capable shoulders.

“What, my pretty fellow! So comfortable? So assured? So near asleep?” Fate would seem to say before he takes the most pointed dagger to “stab our spirits broad awake.”

But he would be a temerarious thinker who would deny the uses of adversity, and a dullard who could not see that the spirit grows most swiftly when the blows of fate fall fastest.

And in every life when one falls, as each one must who makes a glorious ending, into that miry slough whither the scum and filth of limitation perpetually pour, it is well to remember that the pilgrimage is long and varied, and that Help has

THE HUMAN WAY

a way of wandering on the edges of just such bogs.

Sorrow and anxiety, work and determined action, patience and courage with the small daily tasks, all these help to stretch the personality, but above all the personality stretches as far as its affections. A man is all that he truly perceives and loves, and possession is no true test of absorption. This is the meaning of the old mystic saying: "We are as holy as we will to be holy." For if a man loves holiness, even though he never attains to the actual practice of it, he does at least identify his deeper self with the cause of holiness. When it comes to the issue, his real self will be on that side and if he contradict its mandates he must wage continuous internecine warfare until the stronger element in him gain the victory. For we identify ourselves in the end with what we love.

When we realise the meanness and wretchedness of small, persistent desires, the desire of fame, of health, of strength, of adulation, or, meanest of all, the desire of riches and of power, we begin to be able to lay them aside. Once the feverish futility of trying to make our small bodily wants prevail, has shown itself to us in all its stupidity, we begin to look for medicine for the bare, stripped soul. Then Nature steps in and consoles us.

THE GREAT GIFT

“See!” she says, “how small it all was! Lift up your eyes and look beyond!” And one sees the everlasting hills in their quiet strength and the wonderful inverted bowl above, spilling blue atmosphere over us, and continually shifting its wondrous scenery, and we see the sluggish pools mirroring the heavens, and the moving bodies near it, and we hear the rivers and brooks galloping seaward and the unending swish and surge of the ocean. They all call to us and claim us. We are even as they are; we, too, change with the changing phases of the moon; we, too, ceaselessly moan with the sea; we are deathlessly aspiring like the hills, and with this feeling of identification with all creation comes the presentiment of peace.

It is less hard to be at ease with nature than to be at ease with man, but after all he falls short of his full stature who does not ultimately see himself in every man and every man in himself. We are so little different—all of us! A few externals torn away and we face each other in a mirror; the self-same hungry, pleading, grasping atoms, yearning for fuller being and for more adornments, spasmodically seizing them, weeping at disappointments, beating down and destroying obstacles and very weary and somewhat disillusioned when victory rewards us; all so alike and all in such piteous

THE HUMAN WAY

plight! It would seem that universal benevolence would be the natural result of our first insight, but it is not without effort that we approach man. The soul is clothed on with many garments of time and of manner wherewith to hide its real worth. Often we ourselves hardly know what we have to offer others. Sometimes we think the things we have are all there is to give, but the gift of the quality of ourselves, or noble expression of the inward intent, are the real gifts of value. In a much-read recent novel there is a hero who by mere wilful assumption of cynicism alienates his wife and cripples her life. It is the sin of thinking concrete things are the only true values upon earth. Generous deeds he recognised, but the words which should frame them he would have no dealings with. In the gospels Christ's chief services were noble words and divine visions. But to establish noble relations with others presupposes a deep intimacy with ourselves. We must know what we have to present, and a false estimate of ourselves, our motives, our powers is fatal to friendship or even to the lesser human relations. The beauty of our relations rests upon sincerity, and we can only be sincere with others when we have been profoundly sincere with ourselves. This requires much reflection and a keen measuring of ourselves, our

THE ESCAPE

downfalls and our achievements. Only in this way do we meet men fairly and helpfully. The area of the soul expands with every new man or clan or race we can so meet.

Expansion comes, too, from courage in undertaking. Who fears the long task and trembles lest concentration and purpose falter ere he come to an end, narrows his scope. A prolonged service, a steady discipline stretching through years of regular accretion, this gives fulness and continuity to the broken life. It is the tendency of life to offer itself in scraps and fragments until, looking back, we have only such points of identity as name and kindred and habitation. But a life aiming ever at absorbing all experience gains a new strength of personality, a new sense of power over time.

All life is the chance to enlarge the self—to escape the hours of mere broken repetition of tasks and meaningless diversions—a chance to fling out our shuttle into the open, weaving a pattern beyond space and time.

VII

THE HIDDEN LIFE

UPON the secret life depends the growth and development of personality. The complexity, the fulness of modern life, the difficulty of adjusting one's self to increasingly exorbitant external demands are wearing out many a spirit, and the inward life is dissipated in the outer struggle. These are breaking the spirit and leaving stragglers on the march, whose courage has failed, and whose part in the general movement has become a drag instead of an impulsion. Such are those whose nervous systems are in continuous conflict with the scheme of the universe; the firmness and ruthlessness of the establishment of the universe inevitably and constantly pushes them to the wall. The result is the great army of the vanquished; people hopelessly a prey to melancholy, to hysteria, to depression and drugs.

The nice adjustment of spirit and body, the training of the spirit to take charge of the body,

THE PERSONALITY AND THE UNIVERSE

and the training of the body to obey the behests of the spirit, are difficult but not insuperable matters. It is no wonder that in the multiplicity of objects and ideas many individuals should stumble; rather it is a wonder that so many find an anchor and remain steadfast to some ideal of truth and self-sacrifice and fair intent.

There are many efforts made now to gather together these invalids with body and spirit at odds, prey to diseases of the will and the personality, and by encouragement and kindly suggestions, by brave thoughts and healthful words, by repeated infusions of wisdom to renew their relations to life and effort, and to lead them from the bonds of self. For "Happiness," an old German writer said, "has no private business to transact." Indeed, hard as it is to realise, happiness and health come in those moments when most we are rid of ourselves. Whether in the disinterested love of an art, whether in a faith, or in work of human service, it is when we consecrate our energies to something beyond ourselves, and grow to *feel* as well as to *say* that our little personal success or failure does not matter, that we are on the road that leads to happiness. This is a hard lesson to teach even normal man, but to teach it to the abnormal man who has thrown up his hands and given up the

THE HUMAN WAY

game, who has submitted to the thralldom of a diseased self, is one of the most difficult of works. Yet no one can be spared. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground" is one of the most difficult of scriptures to believe, and to bear in mind that there is no completion anywhere while so much as one soul lingers in the valley of despair is as hard to realise as it is indubitably true. These folk have come, like Dante, to the dark wood where the "straight way" is lost, and where sin and sorrow and despair lie in wait to trap the falterer. But to Dante, remember, the dark was but the opening to light. It was after this night in the wood, so wild, rough and stubborn that even to think on it long after, renewed the fear of it, bitter as death, that Dante met his guide who offered to lead him out of the wood by a road which should show him the eternal roots of misery and of joy, where he should hear the hopeless shrieks, should see the ancient spirits in pain calling for a second death, and also see those who are content in the fire of trial because they yet hope to come, whensoever it shall be, among the blessed.

The antidote to being born is virtue; the antidote to destiny is wisdom. There is no suffering, no struggle, no shame that may not justify itself, provided the issue be breadth, virtue, and wisdom.

THE VALUE OF SPECULATION

And for this end all the powers of the mind and soul must be played to the utmost. We are somewhat in the habit of divorcing the idea of speculative thought from that of usefulness, and of considering it a dreamer's vagary without which the world would progress along its accustomed and predestined route. It is particularly the habit of set and elderly people to speak with scorn of schools of thought, methods of careful preparation for life, and abstract consideration of values. They insist that the world was better off when people did things and thought less about them. The difficulty in leaving ourselves to act without forethought is, that we find ourselves prepared only for such events as have taken place before within our experience or within the experience of those we have talked with or read of, whereas we are likely to be plunged at any moment into a new set of circumstances or given a new lot of conditions and motives which alter the most apparently similar cases. Then, indeed, for lack of the habit of speculative thought, of weighing motives and values, we are apt to drown in our own absurdities or, worse, commit hideous injustices.

Odd as it may seem, the end of speculation is practice. The process may seem wasteful and futile, but the results, if one examine them, are

THE HUMAN WAY

worth the energy spent; and the lives we see about us, lived without the direction of abstract thought, are warnings against accepting the cheap and easy ways of life. Traditional wisdom, blindly accepted, is very likely to result in a stony image of life without any smelting, fusing or forming power behind it. Every moral maxim must have new life added to it as it filters through a new personality, or it remains unvivified, without power to project new forces or to shed light upon the path for those clambering upward. The rules and the traditions that sink in, that find the new soil of fresh interpretations to nourish them, grow stronger roots and fairer blossoms out of the new conditions. But the certain thing is that no lifelessly accepted traditions will be fruitful.

The intellectual way to goodness is, it is true, fraught with dangers and with pitfalls, and among our sorriest modern sights are the free-minded thinkers who have set rules aside before they attained to that love of their kind which inhibited injury. It is throwing aside the old dispensation before the new one is wholly grasped. A man who does this is indeed a leaf in the wind, blown hither and yon without will of his own or foothold anywhere. The so-called artistic temperament, held as it is by double threads to the step below and

THEORY AND PRACTISE

the step above mere moral obedience, sensitively allied to the freedom and the irregularity of nature, eagerly and swiftly responsive to the claims of love, has the most perilous of mortal journeys to make. It undertakes to scale the slippery rocks of human mistakes, with no staff to steady itself. It takes big risks, but when it succeeds, the result is glorious indeed.

And shall we regret that the faces of such adventurers are marked by anxiety and uncertainty, their feet bruised and bleeding with clinging to their perilous foothold? and that the large serenity, the vivid glow of purity and peace which we see in the faces of the few surviving Puritans who have asked no questions and taken no risks, but have come to the end of life safely and serenely without falls and without mistakes, can never be theirs?

For we must not forget that rules, mere rules, at times do lead man on slowly and securely to a higher plane, and he who has never dishonoured his Creator nor injured his fellow just because he has learned the Ten Commandments and spent his life obeying them, is very apt to end on the level where it is natural to love goodness with all his heart and his neighbour as himself. If the genius or the saintliness to obey rules *without* an anæmic conscious-

THE HUMAN WAY

ness or dried-up sympathies be his, he is, perhaps, the greater victor.

For he who comes back into the fold after battles on the outside is never quite the same as he who has lived inside always. The highest power belongs to the man who has never made mistakes. Rules are the quintessence of experience, and it would be hard to think that he who willingly submitted himself to the laws handed down by the wisdom of the ages for the good of humanity, should not finally have prepared himself to hear the Eternal Voice which delivers us from mere opinions about right and wrong. The man, however, who has discovered by speculation the vitality underlying rules, even if his means of discovery be a series of mistakes, is a creator; he has put significance into life.

The vision of the world is terribly bewildering. Right and wrong in their results are harrowing to look upon. We have to become accustomed to the thought that justice is not so much a supernatural revelation as an outcome of human sensibility, and is slow of growth. It comes upon us at times with crushing force that there is no justice in chance or fate; the good man is bared to calamity, to storm, shipwreck and earthquake, to poverty and failure, and the wicked man, if he but be

THE FLOURISHING OF THE WICKED

canny, is still as in the days of the Psalmist, likely to flourish and spread himself as a green bay-tree. The singer of the psalms showed an ethical insight far in advance of the average human consciousness when he made that marvellously poetic effort to explain the adjustment of rewards and punishments in the thirty-seventh psalm, where he had to admit that the wicked man usually gained his share of the world's goods and prospered exceedingly, while the utmost that could be promised to the righteous was that his seed should not be beggars and his end should be peace. The law that like will unto like, and that rewards are of the nature of the effort put forth, is never broken down. The whole scheme of punishments and rewards, childishly as we may play with them in fancy at times, is simply the law that effort put forth calls into being results of like kind unto the effort, that a man's life grows into the shape and stature of his thoughts and his wishes. It may be because we are so apt to say to the little child, "Be good and I'll give you some candy," that the fact like a catapultic stone falls upon youth, that the reward of duty done is not praise or acclaim or success or prosperity, but simply the power to fulfil further duties; that it is not the way of Destiny to answer to man's impatient

THE HUMAN WAY

clamour, but to far-off ends and unsearchable issues.

The religious consciousness leads to a patient acquiescence in the higher and ultimate designs of Destiny and the strength for self-sacrifice, so that such designs may not be even temporarily impeded. The impartial methods of nature with the just and the unjust cannot be superseded, nor, except in very slight measure, controlled; but the ideal of human justice grows steadily. As the centuries add to the exactitude of man's sense of moral justice, it becomes less and less possible for a man to accept those gains which mean another's loss. The voluntary embracing of poverty was at one time the hall-mark of a saint, and saints were looked upon as supernaturally dowered. Such saints are cast abroad over the earth to-day and we look upon them as only a little odd, and wonder what disappointments may have taught them the worthlessness of earthly goods and the value of spiritual rewards. The slum-workers, the social-settlement people, the theosophists, and the various new sects and creeds which lay stress upon inward effort and inward results, lay no claim to a supernatural holiness, but simply emphasise the fact that results are according to the nature of effort, and that peace is not gained by making another

CAUSE AND EFFECT

suffer; the aim with them is wider and embraces humanity instead of circling a mere personal career. If one give one's faith to the theory that there is an all-knowing, all-loving creative Intelligence, it follows that such Intelligence would desire the welfare, the growth of all creation equally. Since God is above hazard and chance, the truth must be that imperfect creations are imperfect only in so far as they are in process of growth, only partially created or dropped as a seed into darkness, to work the way out into light and into consciousness. And man, in as far as he acquiesces in all creation, will know no limitation of sympathy, no barriers of separation, but, like Shelley's perfect man, will learn to become "equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless." It has been said of St. Francis, "If you had taken him to the loneliest star that the madness of an astronomer can conceive, he would only have beheld in it the features of a new friend." This is the reward of the acquiescent consciousness. Who believes in a loving universe shall himself gain such, and no journeys through the black coal-sacks of interstellar spaces shall divorce him from the loving hope and trust he has created. Socrates, who said, "No evil can befall a good man," was not protected from the death-penalty, but all the forces of heaven and

THE HUMAN WAY

earth could not make him meet death with trepidation or ignoble fear; he was the victor transforming the horrible shade into a calm and noble visitor.

A modern writer has said that poetry and religion are in essence identical, and differ only in the way in which they are attached to practical life. "Poetry," he says, "is called religion when it intervenes in life; when it merely supervenes upon life it is seen to be nothing but poetry." When that which is of farthest sight and most essentially beautiful, whole in concept, unbiassed by personal considerations, controls life, it is religion; when it is æsthetically contemplated and enjoyed as an adornment of consciousness, it is art, but art divested of its highest powers. For art is great just in so far as it acts upon life and consciousness, and proceeds from the sum of courage and truth in the creator.

Religion, then, is the application of the highest concepts to conduct, and no one will contend that the highest concepts applied to conduct result necessarily in prosperity, riches or honours. As the psalmist foretold, the righteous man may look to have peace in the inward consciousness and to see a good disposition in his children; but as religion rules only in the realm of the ideal, it has only an

LIKE BEGETS LIKE

ideal adequacy. Those who look to virtue to help them to prosperity or to shield them from mischance are allowing themselves to invite the real to encroach upon the ideal. The reward of virtue is peace, is the sense of having attempted at least to apply one's highest concepts to practice in a world quite inadequately prepared for such attempts, and the chances still are that the cunning man, the unscrupulous, the self-interested, will "flourish and spread himself like the green bay-tree," but the end of the righteous is still peace.

But is religious peace nowadays the final goal of the militant soul? No; it is only the prepared soil in which the modern personality sets its plants. If one lay down a volume of religious and philosophic discourse of the fifteenth century and take up one of the present day, one is struck by the complete change of face that has taken place in five centuries. The advice of time past bears almost entirely upon renunciation: endure with fortitude; accept all things as they are, coming in just that form from the hand of an all-wise and guiding Providence who is training man. To accept suffering, to bear it for no other purpose than the spiritual exercise of patience and endurance, was virtue. "A little suffering," says St. Bernard, "is far and away of greater worth than long

THE HUMAN WAY

discipline in good works." And St. Thomas says: "All suffering, however slight, that can be suffered either outwardly or inwardly, is a copy of the most precious suffering of our Lord." John Tauler, in his first All-Saints' Day sermon, urges a habit of suffering upon his listeners as a chief and fruitful source of growth, as the means to eternal salvation, adding: "Man ought, by nature, to suffer rather than to work; to receive rather than to give; for every such gift increases and ennobles the desire for more gifts a thousand times. . . . For God is always working and His spirit is always suffering." One has only to turn from such pages to the utterances of living thinkers to realise how man has seized the matter of his personal salvation out of the hand of Providence to wield it himself, and how complete a *volte-face* he has made in this matter of suffering and doing. If George Meredith states that there is no pain the body suffers that the soul may not grow by, it is not that he extols suffering at all, but that he considers it as a means to press action out of men. For suffering, *per se*, folk nowadays have very little patience; it is merely an obstacle against which a man tries his strength and ingenuity. How can we best smooth the way, attain health, ease, strength, and have leisure for higher pursuits than mere endurance of evil? Far

NEW ASPECTS OF RELIGION

from accepting that eternal and unavoidable residue of ill that still remains when the best we know has been done, modern thinkers assume one of two attitudes: one is to accept it as a means to educe power; to stab the sluggish spirit broad awake; to keep our faculties alert and harden our sinews for fiercer victories, till the misfortunes of fate are shrewdly met by one whose strength and vigour set him above destiny; or, as a recent philosophy meets it, by definitely labelling all misfortune as bad—as conclusive a verdict upon our finite conditions as ever the original verdict “good” was.

“In this real world of sweat and dirt, it seems to me that when a view of things is ‘noble’ that ought to count as a presumption against its truth, and as a philosophic disqualification,” writes a modern philosopher. “The Prince of Darkness may be a gentleman as we are told he is, but whatever the God of heaven and earth is, he can surely be no gentleman. . . . His menial services are needed in the dust of our human trials even more than his dignity is needed in the empyrean.”

This is a new and an alien language to the religious thinkers of a few centuries back. And yet who would call the strenuous truthfulness and rugged sincerity of Doctor James’s point of view other than religious? The main change, then, is

THE HUMAN WAY

that more and more man prepares himself inwardly, decorates the secret places of the soul—takes his destiny into his hands, less and less flings off into the region of the unknown and the unknowable the problem of God's ways with man. If he accepts suffering he *uses* it, either to strengthen his moral muscle or to justify his philosophy. He bears less, he exacts more, he uses more. This may merely mean an increase of sensitiveness. With what stolidity the men of a past age bore the eternal damnation of their fellows! But nowadays there are few among men thick-skinned enough to accept a heaven haunted by shrieks of others' far-off hell, and here is our philosopher who will none of an Absolute who will not come down into the sweat and dirt and misery of human life and cope with them by our sides.

This demand that religion should bring about a literal brotherhood of man and extension of sympathy and good works, results in a tendency to take the external forms of religion more lightly, since we have seen them fail in the one religious end, the care of mankind under an all-loving fatherhood of God. Twenty centuries of Christianity have failed to produce a beneficent relation among men, a preparation for the life out of the body, a compensation for the mortality and muta-

THE USE OF SYMBOLS

bility of human life, a power to overcome the world and gain peace in ourselves. Men have lost themselves in the multiplication of good works and have forgotten that the outer life must yet lean against the secret life, and that external deeds must be the blossoming of hidden thoughts.

The tendency of intellectual men is to discard symbols and to say that the heart is all, the intention all. The fallacy in such argument seems to be that no intention, no mood gains validity and reality until it takes shape in the concrete world; and a frame of mind, a motion of heart, therefore, of their very nature create symbols, and turn back to them again as reminders when the original impulse is faint. An inspiration toward righteousness must be very vague indeed that does not result in a duty performed, an obligation accepted, or some sort of commemoration.

Dogma, from which certain types of mind so instinctively shrink, is, after all, but a dialectical development of symbols whereby the heart may intensify a memory or renew an original impulse of approach to the larger life beyond the self. All knowing is analogy. We conceive only by comparison, by similarity and its negative, and everything, as has been said already, in being what it is, is the symbol of something more. To Blake the

THE HUMAN WAY

sun was not a round globe of fire but an innumerable company of the heavenly host; and to what man is nature a mere collection of earthly irregularities, set in atmosphere and grown upon with plants, rather than the language whereby the Infinite communicates with man? From time immemorial, rites and usages and mysteries have been the projection of man's need to signify something beyond his power of speech or rational thought. That is the infinite in us striving to break bounds.

It matters little that, to certain types of mind, the sign is confused with the substance for which it stands. We are not all on the same level, nor for many ages shall we be. The fact that many misuse a symbol or misinterpret a dogma is in itself no real reason for discarding them. The universe as it comes to us is all symbolical, all reminiscent, all a suggestion. Would one wish to blame the little boy who, driving through a foreign city, suddenly threw up his cap and shouted because on a distant building he saw his country's flag? With what a rush it brought back to him in an alien and indifferent land the whole love of the whole life! Probably at home the thought of love of country would have had but little meaning for him, but away, where that uppermost interest was strange and unnoted by all about him, a few

THE STEEP PATH

bars and stars, painted on a rag and hung from a stick, stood for a wealth of loyalty, devotion, power of self-sacrifice. For the symbol implies absence and presence, pain and joy. Even so does the cup stand for us as a reminder of charity, even unto self-immolation and death, from the cup of cold water offered unto the least of the little ones, to the cup which could not pass away until it had become the cup of the sacramental commemoration of the world. The use, then, of the symbol is to stimulate emotion, to remind us of those trailing clouds of glory, of which, somewhere in "the dim backward and abysm" of his mind, each man is vaguely aware. The height of the significance of a dogma must depend upon the zeal with which one has trodden the path toward the goal. There are many ways that lead thereto, but as one gets farther from the sensuous, the paths are strait and steep, and silence and isolation guard one on either hand.

Let the symbol, then, do its work, to each mind according to the mind's own need. Is it not arrogant to presuppose our own way the only one or the best? What man, indeed, can be farther from God than that limited one who attempts to interpret God's mind? In fear and trembling, in aspiring and renewed effort, we listen, listen for the

THE HUMAN WAY

command, solacing but not judging, lest indeed we shall be judged again.

There are Protestants who scoff at the Catholic because he says that his Lord is "actually" present at the altar. But what does "actually" mean? Is the Spirit of Righteousness and Freedom *not* present wherever men seek Him, on the cross, in the cup, in the "still, small voice," or in the thick darkness? Where best we seek, there most He is. And it is rather a matter of rejoicing than of scoffing that we seek in different places, under varying guises. What a fragrant close of pleasantness and intimacy that must have been to the harassed and overworked dressmaker who told her customer: "It would be too much for me, but I get up every morning early and go into the church over there, and sit a little while with Our Lord." And surely, surely Our Lord met her there; as surely as He met Moses in the burning bush or Elijah in the still, small voice. For whatever the great Spirit of Righteousness be, over and above our pitiful small guesses and futile gropings, He is the spirit of response and mercy and love, in whom is no change neither shadow of turning.

It was a great French thinker who, after much doubt and questioning, finally *felt* the answer: "Be comforted! had you not found me you would

THE SEARCH AND THE SOUGHT-FOR

not seek me.” That is a profound thought. The sought-for is also the search, and there is no more infallible sign of the Presence than the seeking after Him. Nor need the search bring joy and peace. The chain of cause and effect is long and intricate, the chase is the impatient hastening after what is not yet complete, and it may mean most exquisite pain. To hope for righteousness and to know ourselves, can this be other than anguish, and yet anguish not without its hope of assuagement? For the signs and the promises of perfection are everywhere, and the symbols of hope are eternal.

We do not habitually know the whole of ourselves. There is an inward depth of aspiration in each man which he only feels at moments and after some effort. Even then it is little more than an evanescent glimpse that he gets of his whole desire and aim, a desire which means complete escape from the habitual self. “Thus the disciple of life, the chrysalis of an angel, works through his ideal, his own future rebirth. The divine life is a series of successive deaths in which the spirit cuts off its imperfections and yields to the growing attraction of the centre of inevitable gravitation—the sun of intelligence and love.” But this is no instinctive process. It is not accomplished by dis-

THE HUMAN WAY

carding symbols and external forms. It is more nearly to be accomplished by refusing to rest content with the outer form, by a persistent pressing on through the form to the inward meaning and end of all form, an absorption into the essence and significance of life. And doubtless as this is accomplished, more and more the promises of the religious life are confirmed. We shall find our human relations taking on unsuspected beneficence and scope, the life embodied will be more and more a graspable idea, the inevitable sorrows of life will cease to be withering, and the courage which is faith in the infinite, and the peace which passes understanding, will be ours.

In the Book of Common Prayer there is a petition that in this world we may have knowledge of the truth and in the world to come life everlasting. It is impossible to repeat the beautiful and time-sanctified appeal without realising that completeness of knowledge is very slow of response, and that it is more probable that in worlds to come we shall grow slowly—oh, how slowly!—into knowledge of the truth, and in this world we shall be aware of the dawning of life everlasting.

Alongside of agnosticism and scientific proofs of death goes an ever-increasing sense of life everlasting. One remembers the professor who re-

THE PRACTICE OF IMMORTALITY

sponded to his student's impassioned and zealous refutation of the existence of an immortal soul: "Perhaps you are right. *I have an immortal soul, but very probably you have none.*" Browning, as he listened to the dirge of fair Venetian women, exclaimed: "The soul doubtless is immortal, *where a soul can be discerned.*" "Never think of death," wrote Lewis Nettleship, shortly before his own passing, "death is nothing." It is perhaps true that we extend life into other spheres by our desire and by our will. Perhaps to this instinctively creating, appraising, willing self, which is born, we must add intent and persevering desire. Certainly some souls seem nearer life everlasting and some farther away. Should the law of this life hold good in other realms, demand will have something to do with supply. To stretch roots down deep into life and the constitution of the universe, to spread branches far out over life and phenomena, to feel existence gripping hold of, including and covering more life and more existences, is to come even here and now into the feeling of immortality. Who lives persistently in the thought of life without end, has he not already tasted immortality? It is something never to have faced an ending, never to have felt finality, never to have come to terms with an ultimate. To fail, and fail,

THE HUMAN WAY

and fail again, as a brave soldier must, and fight with renewed vigour every time, to hold in hand all the experience and knowledge and power of many defeats and march on anew with them to a higher and a further victory, is to grow into the feeling of life everlasting. The victor of life must always lay the ghosts of his personal sorrows, he must press on until even the star of his inborn destiny lies below his feet, mastered and outsped. And who can conceive of a great victor of destiny vanquished by Death? When he passes beyond our vision it is to set alight the black passages and unlighted chambers of the future.

Who lives in the consciousness of life without end, lives with a different courage from his who lives trying to make life out of the poor changes contained in threescore years and ten. And to live in the consciousness of immortality may mean something very different from a desire to describe dogmatically what the great mysteries of consciousness beyond this embodiment may be. It may mean only the continuous effort to inquire into the true nature of things. To study persistently as only those can who love steadfastly and nobly the structure of the life in which we move and have our being; to weave our enterprises deeply into the woof of all human life; to identify

CONTINUITY OF AGENCY

ourselves with all that is offered to us here—this is somehow to posit our continuance in the flow of time and the revolution of the worlds.

“We taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless as we wish our souls to be.”

Mr. Balfour, in a recent address to the British Association of Science, pointed out that the very solidity of matter, one of the firmest convictions of man, is melting away under recent electrical investigation. “It may seem singular,” he said, “that down to five years ago our race has, without exception, lived and died in a world of illusions, and that these illusions have not been about things remote and abstract, things transcendental and divine, but about what men see and handle, about those plain matters of fact among which common sense moves with its most confident step and most self-satisfied smile.” Perhaps the sense which most distinctly marks off the mystic from the man in the street is that which forbids a mortal to put his whole trust in the witness of the senses. He has always had a secret knowledge that the created world is but a symbol of something greater, something ungrasped.

In the published fragments of Nettleship’s letters

THE HUMAN WAY

there are some very interesting attempts at seeing life in just proportions; seeing whole and in unbroken continuity that which we usually come at in fragments. In a wonderful passage on the significance of the Eucharist, he follows up the rational significance of the ceremony — neither the prevalent view that the eating of bread and drinking of wine are commemorative signs or symbols, nor the more orthodox view that the elements are miraculously transformed substances, seems to him to state the gist of the matter. But what he points out is the unbroken continuity of agency; the very simplest act of eating is an act in virtue of which a given material coming in contact with another actually produces a third with new properties and new powers of further creation, so that in the simplest and realest way bread may become, as an agent, an element in an artistic, moral, or spiritual result. It may therefore quite literally beget a picture, a brave act, the power to overcome temptation. And instead of ceasing to eat and drink in order to be holy, or to eat and drink in some special ceremonial, every bite of food might be taken literally to the glory of God and the building up of a spiritual kingdom. The whole mystic tendency is not so much to hallow one's self by special exercises in special places, but to raise all the proc-

THE BLESSING

esses of life into a realm of sanctity. The mystic realises life as a process of assimilation; one thing being assimilated by another, and producing something different from either agency. Continuity and wholeness, those aspects we are so likely to lose hold of in our rough and ready modes of dealing with the universe, are yet the very heart of the mystery into which we are being initiated.

It is the mystic, therefore, who comes nearest to the common-sense truth of things. He recognises the mystery of existence. He refuses to explain it away by any formula or set of words. If he draws lines and cuts things into sections it is merely for convenience's sake, and inwardly he knows that there is no break in the continuity of life. For no fragment can really be broken off from the whole; and neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth shall separate us from the searching love of God, beyond which no soul can drift.

It is quite in the nature of things that mysticism should have cheap and hysterical developments. On the perilous edge between two worlds, the visible and the invisible, many become giddy and fall, or lose their heads and turn back to some cheap and easy formula which they can make popular. But

THE HUMAN WAY

the real mystic is the last to take refuge in words. His journey is toward an understanding silence and awe. The profounder his search, the briefer his account will be, and the more the effect will be shown merely in his power of living and loving. He can fight the fight, keep the faith and endure the torture. If his first demand, "Tell me thy name," go unanswered, yet surely his asseveration, "I will not let thee go till thou bless me," has its response. For since the first breath of mysticism swept over the Aryan race, he has known how to overcome fear and desire and substitute love in their place, since only so do we let down the barriers of our little selves and emerge into the larger self.

And surely he has borne away a blessing of assurance and content even in the present cloudy aspect of mortal things. For his joys grow neither out of accumulation of things nor out of the sense of progress, but from a profound appreciation of the vision of life spread before him; the exercise of his faculties, faith and hope and love being the greatest among them, and the realisation that the eternal life is in the moment, at any turn, when we win the power of knowing it; and that it is not the moments that fly from us, but we who in our light and casual instability are continually turn-

THE MYSTIC'S PROGRESS

ing from them. But as we gain in depth of consciousness we shall surely see the whole vision of life spread before us, an eternal, perfected possession. And toward this ampler vision the mystic moves.

VIII

SOLITUDE

THE fashions of the world change bit by bit and that which was the necessity of one age becomes the luxury of another. In the leisurely days of a century ago when people described the casual fluctuations of their thoughts and feelings in voluminous letters, which when gathered together and published make two or three portly volumes, there must have been not only more time but a great deal more space in the world. There must have been plenty of wholesome solitude and room for a person to sit down alone with himself and get acquainted. Nowadays not only is intimate converse with ourselves difficult but society is almost obligatory. Gregariousness is a moral creed. We live in a world of society and societies, of clubs and philanthropies, organised and co-operative labour and leisure, and whatever the deprivations of modern man may be, it would seem that he is always amply supplied with the presence of his neighbour.

GREGARIOUS LIVING

Telephones have facilitated an almost uninterrupted interchange of trivial comment, expensive emotions flit airily over telegraph wires, and the cables and wireless have annulled the loneliness of the sea. We begin to wonder what will become of the old, time-worn emotions if once we get rid of the sense of distance and separation. The pain of parting, the solemnity of long good-byes amounting almost to a foretaste of the pangs of death, the yearnings for the absent and anxieties for the distant, seem doomed to drop out of life. We are half afraid to say "good-bye" with any sort of seriousness lest, by unexpected readjustment, a return steamer deposit our friend by our side in a fortnight or less and we find the gravity of our emotions unjustified. I do not complain that life is made easier and brighter by modern inventions, but I cannot but wonder if all the noise and bustle and unending activity are going to lessen the human capacity for thinking and feeling. Undoubtedly, unalleviated gregariousness, constant diversion from the profounder interests of life, makes for a superficial consciousness.

Youth, of course, loves diversion, companionships and publicity. Getting acquainted with the inner life and thought and motive is not a gay or diverting exercise in the beginning, and youth is

THE HUMAN WAY

more concerned to enjoy than to know. Out of sheer abundance of vitality, of course, it keeps up a certain amount of feeling, but alas, youth dissipates emotion by feeling aloud. All the literature of confession, all the outbursts of unhappy wives and forsaken lovers and neglected geniuses, testify to this inherent instinct in the young to make a noise about themselves, to strive, and cry out upon the world to hear while they voluminously explain themselves. But this form of publicity is futile and a mistake. There comes an inevitable turning-point. Maturity makes a *volte-face*; self-knowledge yearns for silence. There comes an age at which one is haunted by the fear that he shall be understood, and one seeks refuge in the obvious rather than submit to publicity. When a man really comes to know himself he prefers to do it in silence. There is a kind of joy in private pursuits, a sacredness attaching to personal emotions, a power of growth in reserve which warns a man from the mere dissipating of energies in explanations. Youth may fancy any mention better than none, and any form of notoriety distinguished, but it is an undesirable truth that those of whom there is most to say are those who most persistently court privacy. The reason is palpable. It is the half-grown, the incomplete, and inadequate life that seeks

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

support outside. The distraction of gossip and unending small activities and curiosities save men from the emptiness of themselves. The puffing and blowing and steaming is a method of letting off energy which, contained, might move an engine. Power is reserve and reserve is power. The weak man and the ignorant man overflow with explanations and autobiographical data, but that which makes a life well worth living out is the quiet growth in understanding, the penetration to the significance hidden behind appearances, the reconciliation with one's own soul, and energetic carrying out of that soul's purposes. This is not accomplished by noise and distraction; it is accomplished by the quiet gathering in of the powers, by a rigid choosing of places and pursuits, by the habit of listening to the inward voices of the silence.

So youth loses, by constant intercourse, the power and the meaning of emotion, and, worse and more important, loses its chance to gain self-knowledge. The human soul develops in its body by grave and beautiful thoughts, long treasured in the silence, allowed to put down roots in the dark before they are set in the glare of publicity.

"Let men live," said Maeterlinck, "as an angel just born lives, or as a woman in love, or a man about to die." This is the significant insight into

THE HUMAN WAY

life, and surely it is a view which turns hastily from a vulgar and a futile publicity. In his moment of grave and strong emotion a man seeks a cell, and when he emerges it is not for the purpose of explaining his absence, but to do the deeds of courage and support which shall show men the meaning of the private life, the withdrawal, the hidden vigil.

“The thoughts that come with doves’ feet rule the world.” The great messages, the words of lasting significance sound only through the stillness. It is when, apart from all men, we listen, listen for the thoughts dove-footed, that we come to know ourselves and our powers, and out of the solitude draw lines in the real world.

Life, the infinite and the illimitable, lies before us, awaiting its garments of art; to be clothed upon with form and colour and words; but who will weave the garment must first be able to look at life from a still shelter. To see life simply and sincerely, to realise how much of it lies beyond us and inattentive to us, to accept—nay, to have accepted—one’s little place in the universe and have ceased to wail and struggle for a larger point of vantage: these are the established conditions of production. And any sincere and simple record, conscientiously made by unremitting, assiduous observation and reflection, is an achievement, adds to the docu-

THE POWER OF SILENCE

mentary evidence of what this human life is and may be. "I set down what I see, what I feel, what I have lived, writing it as well as I am able," was J. K. Huysmans' account of his wonderful human documents. Kipling, too, tells how, in early youth, when he first set out to write, his method was to set down in black and white, without preference or prejudice, such matters as passed before him when he was still enough to watch.

The producer must have faith that his perceptions are worth something, that they have their meaning, their reliability, their value in the scheme of things; and who keeps his mind and his perceptions plastic, who refuses to crystallise or settle into a mould, shall find that achievement will grow out of still perceptions.

It is interesting to reflect that the great body of poetry, certainly most lyric poetry, the elegies, threnodies and meditations, are the direct outcome of the loneliness and silence in which a man had leisure to feel, to think over, to come to understand his own emotions. He adorns the spot into which no man enters by turning over and over, beautifying, enlarging, enriching all his thoughts and feelings, making them more and more truly his, a part of himself, because he has time to nourish and cultivate them before they are cast upon the world to

THE HUMAN WAY

be tempered and polished and worn smooth by contact with others. It is in solitude only that we face true love, deep sorrow, death.

“I know you, solitary griefs,
Desolate passions, aching hours,
I know you, tremulous beliefs,
Agonised hopes and ashen flowers.”

It is certainly in solitude that the life of dream and vision wakes for us, and all who know it at all can testify that it offers solace in circumstances which might otherwise be totally unbearable. When we speak of the significance of dreams and of visions, we are at once on perilous ground, for we are dealing with that which is for the person speaking very vital, but which borders upon the incommunicable. In speaking of any wholly inward experience, we find difficulty in making an exact statement. The fact is so intimately of ourselves that it is by its nature tinged with personality and, at best, can be little more than a subjectively coloured impression.

The extent to which dreams mean anything to the waking man depends greatly upon temperament. The ability to register dreams on the waking consciousness varies and the rationale of dream-life is widely divergent in different people. The more literal and prosaic the mind in waking life,

THE GATE TO DREAMS AND VISIONS

the more utterly irrational and incoherent the dream-life is apt to be, but naïve and impressionable natures, those natures that are ever alert to the winds that blow over the spirit, seem to receive warnings and refreshment and outlook from the hours when the upper intelligence rests. To children, particularly, the experiences of dream-life are extremely real, pleasure-giving or terrifying. The mind then is little ruled by reason, and it has surely often happened that the recurrent and dominating dreams of childhood seem to bear some presage or warning of mature life. St. Augustine, though speaking guardedly, admits that visions may be granted by the mediation of angels, and all religious systems of thought produce men in whom the barriers of the self seem somewhat let down, so that the voices from the silence can break in upon them. Certainly, it is when the forced activity of the brain, set in motion and kept going by the power of the will, is quiescent, that the profoundest of our thoughts flower in us. Whether this proves that the best of our thought flows in upon us from without or that the brain works best and is more fully at one when self-conscious effort is stilled, or whether it proves, as many believe, that so-called feeling or intuition is deeper than reason, it is difficult to say, but it would seem to be certain that,

THE HUMAN WAY

as Maeterlinck says, there are more profound and more interesting regions than those of reason and intelligence. Something surely is to be gained by cultivating the stillness in ourselves and by learning to register the incoherent dream-life upon the upper intelligence and to judge it.

It was nothing more authoritative than a vision that turned St. Paul from his path of human glory to martyrdom. It was a vision which sent St. Theresa to her vocation. St. Francis held the Christ-child in his arms, and St. Catherine saw the heavens open and the Judge upon His throne when she needed solace. Blake transcended the sorrow of the death of his best-beloved because he saw the soul as it escaped from the body, making skyward, and clapping its hands for joy, and his communing with that soul was never interrupted by its disembodiment. Tennyson was wont in boyhood, when alone, to repeat his own name over and over to himself, till out of the consciousness of individuality, individuality seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not in a confused state but in a clear and sure one, so that death seemed to him impossibility and the loss of personality seemed not extinction but the true life.

But of these dreams that warn us of dangers and of deaths, or strange symbolical settings that

AT ANY TURN

seem to foreshadow our future, it is more difficult to give account. I know of a person who, having come to the turning-point between youth and maturity, dreamed that he was travelling over a wide and level land, a dreary and unbroken stretch of colourless waste. The journey was accompanied by inexplicable sensations of terror and of dreariness until, lifting his eyes, he saw approaching him in the car an old friend who said: "Don't touch me, but don't be afraid. I too have made this journey." At that a screen was suddenly put around the dreamer on three sides, so that he could only look out over the waste of landscape. When he questioned what it meant the answer came: "Your friend says you must never look back again, you must never look around, you must look straight forward." The dream had significance, for it proved that the friend who had appeared was indeed strangely removed from that time forth, and that the whole condition of life of the dreamer was such that he was projected into the future, and the life of the past and of the moment were ever after shut off from him.

There is a transforming power in dreams—a power which presents itself under rigid restrictions to the waking sense, but which seems to work under wider laws when it addresses itself to the passive

THE HUMAN WAY

mind. After all, what we mainly infer is, that the limitations of the self are not fixed, not definitely determined. There seems to be a possibility of knowledge shorn of the processes of knowledge, and we have more avenues of perception than as yet we actually realise.

But surely the dream-voices never break in upon noisy living. Plotinus spoke of his own death as "the flight of the Alone to the Alone," admitting how all his life he had recognised and become content with the soul's inevitable loneliness; and what more beautiful outlook can we take, when we say a last farewell to poor mortality, than the return of the isolated to Him who without the return of each and every soul must dwell in eternal loneliness? Pythagoras, too, was wont to ask the applicants who came for admission to his school if they could walk alone and in untrodden paths, before they were admitted. The cloistral life made allowances for this need of man. Thomas à Kempis never tires of enumerating the benefits a man may derive from being alone. "Read, write, mourn and pray," he insists, and adds: "No man can safely speak but he that would rather hold his peace. No man can safely appear abroad but he that would rather abide at home."

The little oases of loneliness that fall as the share

THE CELL OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

of most of us in the midst of our daily adventures, yet serve to sharpen our hearing of life as it slips past us, to deepen somewhat our joys and sorrows and to intensify our consciousness of this little space of time between an eternity and an eternity; they give us a moment to gird our loins and take our strength in hand that the meaning we put into the thousand little daily activities may not be too trivial. They are the silent watches where we transform our scraps of observation into reflection.

It is difficult at times to know where to find a cell of stillness, but sometimes, like other blessings, solitude comes upon us unawaited and unsought. A friend forgets an engagement, and as we drop into the easy-chair to wait, time stops and the hour becomes a thousand years; absorbed in the flickering shadows that play magic on the walls, or intently listening to the click of the flames as they eat up the coals, we find the space of quiet awaking a dead past, bringing lost friends to our side, rousing a current of larger, quieter and more acquiescent thoughts, and we have a sense of the spherical unity of being which we lose in the push and the rush of every-day existence. Or the hour falls after a storm, when water pipes are frozen and wires down and none dares venture to move; then we sit in our undusted rooms—and dust, let it be

THE HUMAN WAY

noted, has its own poetic glamour—reading and meditating, seeing a strange haze of unfamiliarity come over the commonplace aspect of things and our minds grow alive with new suggestion and significance. The same feeling may awaken when we pass, an absolute stranger, through the dusk of a foreign city. Here, unknown and unknowing, watching but unwatched, free of all chance of interruption and intrusion of expectation, the peace of loneliness may fold us in and we may be as self-aware as an invisible ghost passing among men, but affecting no man.

There is, too, ever at hand the cell of self-knowledge open and ready to receive us when we are willing to open the doors and go in. It was the incomparable Emperor himself, the best of all authorities, who told us that to rush about seeking retreat in the mountains, in country-houses, and by the sea-shore was the mark of the commonest men, and that it was always in our power to retreat within ourselves; for nowhere, either with more quiet or more freedom from care, does a man retire than into his own soul, particularly when he has within him such thoughts as bring him tranquillity. "And I affirm," writes the Emperor, "that tranquillity is nothing else than the good ordering of the mind." The beginning of knowing ourselves,

SELF-EXAMINATION

especially if we begin late in life, is like to be a painful process; if, by happy hazard, we escape meeting a sinful person, we are still very apt to meet a vain and egotistical one, or a flippant pleasure-seeker, and none such are good for the close intimacies of constant communion. Those religious faiths that taught self-examination and confession as a part of practice had this element of good, that they aimed at introducing a man to himself, and any sincere and sinful person could procure the acquaintance, could learn to make the retreat into himself not only a possible and bearable matter, but ultimately what it was intended to be, a refuge from the casualties and storms of life. There one may take stock of one's capacities and choose what to develop, sift one's interests and know which to pursue in order to gain the tranquillity which in the great Emperor seemed to be unshakable. There one grows to understand that by the multiplicity of our perceptions are our feelings and relations enlarged. There is no harm in having an absorbed interest in bonnets, but if one adds thereto an absorbed interest in the courses of the stars one gains a certain peacefulness of disposition which bonnets, unattended, cannot give. It may seem a *non sequitur*, but in reality a knowledge of flowers and their ways and habits, a sincere love of their

THE HUMAN WAY

beauty, will do more than sermons to control a high temper; a knowledge of poetry banishes fear; and a taste for metaphysics endows with tolerance. To meet ourselves alone and to get acquainted is to take stock of our perceptions and interests, and to enlarge and improve them in whatever way we find necessary to make ourselves agreeable and improving acquaintances. To find that a large part of our unconscious mental energy is spent in idle wishing for money or fame or accessories is a grievous matter, for we are well aware that a time will come when to have owned a palace or to have walked past one daily will be one and the same thing, and the only matter of import will be the kind of spirit that owned or walked.

“Behold,” says Montaigne, “what it is to choose treasures well; to hide them in a place where no man may enter, and which cannot be betrayed but by ourselves; altogether one’s own and wholly free, wherein we may hoard up and stablish our true liberty, there to discourse and meditate and laugh . . . having a mind moving and turning in itself; it may keep itself companie; it hath wherewith to offend and defend, wherewith to receive and wherewith to give.”

Certain it is that a man who is never alone is hardly more than the hull of a man, and no ac-

THE REFUGE OF GENIUS

quaintance with the outside world can equal an intimate self-knowledge. All effectiveness, all power is the outgrowth of a man's secret converse, and it is the quality of our solitude and silence that is named personality and reveals us as we are to other men.

Genius has especially the power of self-knowledge. A mind moving and turning in itself, thoroughly self-acquainted, knows not only its changing surfaces but its abiding depths. It has access to the cell and can call upon the whole self, the united powers.

Indeed what we call genius, as distinguished from talent, or learning, or accomplishment, is really a power of strong appeal to the great masses of mankind which grows out of profound self-knowledge. Probably the method of genius is simpler than it looks to the baffled outsider, who sees merely the effect and is dazzled by the mystery. The genius plumbs deeper into his own nature to bring forth utterance, and at bottom all human beings are akin. It is the outer shells, the upper crusts of ourselves that vary, and beneath these, in all of us, lie the same fundamental longings and desires, the same hopes, the same griefs, the self-same destiny. All together, we hang poised between the two eternities of past and future, with the same

THE HUMAN WAY

questioning eyes set upon a distant goal, wavering between the solutions:—endless dark and dustiness, or endless growth in power and light.

When Kipling writes of the time-expired soldier man, whom he really uses to give expression to the mental attitude of the man of letters, weary with the ways of learning, and going to rest in the simplicity which is at the pinnacle of complexity, as the soldier goes home to his country, his mother and his maid,—

“O, I have come upon the books
And often broke a barrick rule,
And stood beside and watched myself
Be’avin’ like a bloomin’ fool,”

he touches one of those fundamental truths to which all men glow a sudden assent. All of us who are given to retrospection, all but the most fatuous and satisfied, have “stood beside,” and wondered by what inexorable fatality we were pre-ordained, upon all the important occasions of life, to behave so like a “bloomin’ fool.” The only consolation is to realise that others are very much less concerned about us than we are, and so the crassness of our conduct is mainly glaring to ourselves and we can fairly well count upon no more cruel comment from our indulgent fellow-man than a yawn or shrug of the shoulders.

THE WHOLE SELF

If one questions what it is that keeps up this strange division in us, that is more humiliated by a fit of absent-mindedness or a social *contretemps* than by an actual unkindness or injustice, this constant sense of a trembling shyness and hesitating incapacity that speak and act, and this quiet self that "stands beside" and smiles and judges, we find that we are in the habit of living only with a small part of ourselves. We let some quality take possession of us and act for us, and when we call the real self, the whole, collected self, to sit in judgment, it weeps, or at very best it smiles in amusement at the pitifulness of our coping with life, when vanity or self-consciousness, irritability or anger, hold us in sway and act through us.

There are many people whom we know through correspondence, through their work, through results, whom we profoundly admire, and yet meeting them is a dangerous matter. We are so apt to find them pitifully human after all. Then, again, there are people of whose living we can find no visible results adequate to the charm, the beauty, the wisdom of their daily course. We wonder why pictures and music and poems do not drop from them as they pass, so exquisite is the spirit with which they meet the circumstances of the moment.

THE HUMAN WAY

Well, it seems to be a matter of collectedness. "Men vary," a sage said, "according to the swiftness of their responses to the infinite." How much of one's real self can a man collect on the spur of the moment and bring into play during the badi-nage of a dinner-party? How much of the immortal spirit, the part which, in our serious moments, we actually deem worthy to endure beyond the threescore years and ten, can we put into fighting the wind and the mud, the whips and scorns and contumelies of chance? How much of big serenity can we gather into the smile that accepts our inevitable failures? Men vary in greatness really in proportion as they can act from the whole self rather than from the partial self. A sage, a genius, a great man habitually acts from the whole self. Prejudice, desire, inherited and habitual leanings, fear, are in abeyance to the whole self which "stands beside." Its treasure is not of the earth, nor of time; it neither stands nor falls by the small happenings of the moment; it is not consumed by any sense of gain or loss. It has the serenity, aye, the gladsomeness, of the great *Venite* with which we open our lips on the first day when first we sing at Mattins. It is the same confidence with which Pippa, on her holiday, carolled:

SHAKESPEARE

"God's in His Heaven,
All's right with the world!"

This recollection, this holding of the casual and the temporal self to its immovable and everlasting part, is the secret of charm, the basis of judgment, the foundation for a sense of proportionate values, and the crowning gift of genius.

Fancy the detachment of Shakespeare! He lived apparently with zeal and interest the most commonplace of lives; he was an actor, a playwright, a stage-manager, with somewhere at the back of all this activity the quiet to observe Portia and Rosalind and Beatrice going the primrose path of dalliance; he was a friend and lover, concentrated and passionate to the point of giving the ultimate and unsurpassable expression to human love in the *Sonnets*, and yet had that child-like peacefulness and confidence which, in idle moments, become the familiar of Puck, Queen Mab, and Ariel: he conducted a small lawsuit, saved money, bought a country house, and made himself a landed proprietor, while in the still watches his heart bled over the grief-stricken will-paralysis of Hamlet, or wandered at night through the raging storms with the mad old King. We look on and wonder how Shakespeare could see and know the whole world of thought and feeling. By some strange and for-

THE HUMAN WAY

tuitous combination of circumstances he was able to draw on the whole self. We all have *Midsummer Night's Dreams* and *Macbeths* latent in us; if we had not, we should not so thrill with delight when we find them, but our whole self is inaccessible. The beauty of Shakespeare is, if our picture of him is true, that it was not only in the moments of secrecy and silence that the whole self visited him. He seems to have been eminently good company at the Mermaid. He seems to have taken himself so casually that none of his contemporaries felt his miraculous superiority; so unselfconscious was he that he seems never to have attempted to rival the pompous Ben Jonson. Every now and then appears a complete human being on the stage of life to remind men, probably, of what a whole humanity might be: Shakespeare in the sixteenth century, and in the thirteenth St. Francis, that blithe and exquisite spirit, living at one with his brothers and sisters the sun and the wind, the moon and the stars, with an equal love for his little sisters the birds, who listened to him preach, and the ravaging wolf of Gubbio, who could not resist the advance of so much beneficence and tenderness, and "when he was bid, came gently as a lamb and lay down at the feet of St. Francis." Thus it was evident that "the whole frame of the world was obedi-

THE UNFATHOMABLE REGION

ent unto the consecrated senses of the holy man." There was no secret of joy hidden from him who knew that no earthly grief, wrath, insult, or buffeting could overcome him who possessed himself, and who had learned to suffer all things with patience and with gladness because beyond all temporal actions and sufferings he had united himself with the smiling beneficence of universal life.

Indeed, we have an unfathomable, inexhaustible region into which we may drop if we will, when we are brave enough to turn away a little from the eager life of eating, drinking, loving, rejoicing, weeping, attempting to make ourselves secure in this transient home which shall so surely and so shortly be disintegrated and dissolved.

We house ourselves, for a brief time, on an earth which is wheeling through infinite spaces, where three-fourths of its surface is formed of devouring waves fatal to man, where mountains vomit up burning fire, and the winds drop pestilence as they blow. Beyond our dwelling, out in the vague blue spaces, numberless heavenly bodies turn, endlessly shifting positions. An embryo world is flung out from a nebula and across the sky another is condensed into a twirling ball of flame and sent spinning through the universe; moons and planets are making and breaking again; space is dotted with

THE HUMAN WAY

flying meteors and shooting stars; planets cross and recross in the great maze of the cosmic dance. The tired moons, cold and weary, drop away into stars and are reabsorbed, and frozen suns jostle against one another and melt into vapour, while the blow generates a new heat, and new worlds emerge and flit along the æonic course. Even in the little attic where the reader sits juggling with words as his toys, the drama is repeated in little; a ray of sun beating through the dormer-window picks up the motes of dust and sets them whirling into a miniature dance of the worlds, and the eyes that gaze and note and wonder are themselves but glued-together atoms which shall shortly be broken and scattered dust, floating along at the winds' will or set a-capering by the heat.

The mysteries of life are all about us; whoever is not deafened by the clamour of life and blinded by its shifting sights, recognises them and knows what a pitiful fragment is this life of the body. The body and its life remind me of a tiny insect that crossed my page just now. It looked like a grain of yellow sand fitted with six agile legs, and it hastened diagonally across the printed page with all the air of making the shortest cut to an appointment where business was to be transacted. It seemed innocent and busy and self-important, but

THE UNREALITY OF DEATH

the reader, desiring to distinguish an *s* from an *e* set his thumb on the little creature, and in the place of the errand and the activity, the egoistic business and liveliness, there was only a faint brown smudge on the page which the reader turned. The microscopic speck of life was sacrificed to a higher cause, and the reader, at any rate, was peacefully unaware of causing disaster or mourning by the impatient assassination.

In not unlike manner, the other day, some hundred thousand human beings were swept out of existence by one of nature's cataclysmic outbursts. On a larger scale, disaster, falling so suddenly upon men like ourselves, brings home to us the vast, embracing metamorphosis that goes on continuously in the universe. One day these men were all alive and eager in their transient homes, and the next day dissolution clothed a barren chaos where they had been.

But in the midst of wheeling suns and planets, in a universe where man is apparently so slight an atom that he may be destroyed by the hundred thousand, what is it that stands firm and looks on unaffrighted, trusting, hoping, believing? Man hears the turmoil, sees the tragedies, offers his sympathies, works his remedies and moves on, over it all, still pursuing his ends, eager, zealous, un-

THE HUMAN WAY

affrighted, doing what lies at his hand to do, learning what he can, valiantly ignoring his helplessness, and to the last cheerfully gazing out into that great domain that lies beyond his conceptive powers.

How little care nature has for the stability of bodies! It makes and unmakes; it builds up and destroys; it shifts its lines; the sea makes in upon the land and eats the coast; the wind-blown sands heap themselves up into hills and tumble down upon the tree-tops, and the living forest is turned into coal-mines. The methods of nature are all methods of endless change. And yet Emerson says: "All loss, all pain is particular; the universe remains to the heart unhurt." Over the scenes of death and desolation, above the pain of physical suffering, of mortal loss and broken lives, the sun goes smiling across the sky in a universe "to the heart unhurt." Whatever disasters seem to the finite eye, they are as tiny incidents in the course of the world's life.

"But here comes my mistress, the Soul.

The Soul:

Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—

Longer than water ebbs and flows."

This thought and this one only consoles man in the face of the futility of bodily life. In each body

“MY MISTRESS, THE SOUL”

there dwells something not all confined; whose fate is divorced from the body's fate; something that any moment may step outside and take a wider view, may foresee the calm and upbuilding that follow disaster and calamity, aye, can foresee and set to work at it, can imagine the extension beyond embodiment:

“Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am.”

Let any man ask himself if all that he is goes down to breakfast and reads the morning paper; or if all that he is drops to sleep weary and outdone by the day's frettings and fumings. Let any man ask himself if all the acts and the words of his life were gathered together in a shovel and presented, would he be willing to call them all that he is? When the corpse of our dead friend lies in the room with us we have all these things, his face and his hands, his length and breadth, his echoing words and treasured deeds, and yet we say our friend is gone, and this that remains is fit only to be

“Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees.”

How difficult it is in our daily struggles with matter, our rearing and training and teaching the body to do its work, to remember its reality, its

THE HUMAN WAY

inspirer! And yet, herein is all life. Life is not in the body, nor in the house, nor in the world, except as the soul flows through them, and the fate of the soul is divorced from these things; it neither begins nor ends with them; it merely flows through, coaxing matter into momentary life and efficiency, and passing out in due time to further eternal works—

“Who knows if life be not death and death life?”

“For I think,” says Socrates, “that we are very likely dead; and I have heard a wise man say that at this very moment we are dead and that the body is a tomb.”

One thing, too, becomes more and more certain as the history of the world rolls up and we read it. Only those can bear life who by some means keep alive a knowledge of the soul; only those live life triumphantly and courageously who by some means keep up communication between the temporal mind and the soul. The means are varied. Socrates's way was one, and Whitman's another. St. Francis found the perfect way; and yet in lesser degree, with fainter beauty, Luther and Knox and Savonarola, St. John of the Cross and St. Catherine, and hundreds of thousands of men and women to-day know and speak to their

KING OF THE ADVENTURE

souls: "Because, having looked at the objects of the universe, I find there is no one, not any particle of one, but has reference to the soul."

Surely these "objects of the universe" at which Whitman looked have little respect for the body, born and wiped out in a day, passing and repassing; floating by us in varying shapes like waves of cigarette smoke, in cloudy rings of vapour that expand and melt into nothing. But the soul is very lonely; it will not speak where there is noise; nor will it let itself be made known where many are gathered together; and whoever will be a king in this adventure of life, must somehow learn to discern the soul that smiles beyond and "to the heart unhurt" by the flowing instability of matter; he must enter the cell of self-knowledge, holding by the greater part and listening to the voice of the silence, if he would become what all men owe it to themselves to be, one whom "destiny may not surprise nor death dismay."

IX

MEMORAT MEMORIA

THERE is a certain short story by Mr. Henry James, striking because its every word is inevitable, and its form so married to its meaning that the whole has the unity of a fine strain of music heard through a quiet summer twilight, in which the first sentence introduces us to a hero who has "a mortal dislike of lean anniversaries." This ever recurrent anniversary, shorn of its one-time fulness of meaning, is a ghost we all consciously or unconsciously shun. The complexity of our daily life, the thousand and one small activities that claim the passing moment, concur in deadening the feeling for the past, and in hurrying us on, occupied only with the immediate moment. The whole trend of modern life emphasises the value of holding the consciousness steadily concentrated on the issues of the moment. But if we would add a touch of the poet and the seer to the modern man of action, we must remember that

THE ALTAR OF THE DEAD

dreams and memories and reflections are all a part of any *real* life. As for those people who live their whole lives at the top of their voices, they are likely to be forgot as soon as the silver cord is loosed and the pitcher broken at the well, and their places know them no more. But still men will turn back to re-read and ponder the meditations of such as Marcus Aurelius, who indeed lived in battle and commotion, but whose life was deepened and made real by recording through the still night watches the gratitude that he owed his governors, his tutors and his relatives; or by weighing, as he sat in silence at a camp fire, the worth of events and setting down the relation of opinion to reality.

Surely some sort of anniversary, some mark at regular intervals on the blank expanse of life, serves to blaze a trail, to mark a continuous passage in which the past is a part of the present. These points of pause in time are moments when the ghosts of the past come round us thick and fast, and happy is he to whom they "bend down and smile." A year, perhaps, has slipped by us, and we stand, as we have stood before, remembering, regretting, hoping, demanding, questioning. A year and a year and many and many years have slid away, and when we paused we found life much the same, though the elements in it shift position.

THE HUMAN WAY

Things and people appeared and vanished, and new ones filled their places. There were friends we swore should outlast a lifetime; but some of them died and the impress of their lives upon ours waxed faint; and some forgot us and lived beyond our reach or call; and others we forgot and left behind us on the road. And our plans and undertakings, too, succumbed to Destiny. Some were unworthy and we dropped them; and some we accomplished and so forgot; and some met with a forbidding Destiny, and were denied and we dropped them there; and some part of us went on living, and some part of us died. For we live under inexorable law, and law cuts off and builds up without asking leave. Life fleets past us, weaving its own great cosmic pattern which we never grow large enough to see; and the corner of the picture where we play is made of things good and things evil. There are honour and justice and fair intent, and close beside thrive cheating and misery and agony and malignity. There are pauses of rich harmony close against shrieking discords, and there are garish colours and cool stretches of twilit gray, and the flood of the noontide sun and the black shadows of night and death. And all these are composed for an instant like a picture, and then dissolve and vanish, and a new arrangement of like factors is before us.

A POINT IN TIME

Standing to look back upon the years, how like we find life is to the toy kaleidoscope we played with as children. We held it to the eye, and made out a beautiful, multi-coloured, geometrical pattern, and just as we began to count the colours, to note the form, a tremble of the hand, a tilt of the arm, or a vibration in the room, and the pattern fell to pieces, and it all dissolved, and the bits of coloured glass fell into a new combination. And so we face the kaleidoscopic play of Life, and wonder if out of the phantasmal mystery there is a thing a man may save from the recurrent dissolution.

At any rate, man dots the limitless web that covers him in this dream-like day of life by reminding himself of memory: *memorat memoria*. He prolongs the visions of the dreams that pass in his heart; he gives continuity to the swift happenings and changes; he peers into the past, and, unbaffled by the dusk and secrecies ahead, he strains his eyes to see the future. He draws rules of wisdom from the fading and renewing of the fluctuous universe. He lays hold upon the piety of remembrance, and prolongs human relations past death and above discord; he meets calamity with high courage, and robs it of half its venom; he directs his deeds so that he may draw as much as possible the inevitable ills upon his own head and spare another's;

THE HUMAN WAY

and he makes a religion out of the chances of posterity, and deals with the world for the sake of those whom he shall never set eyes upon. He recites to himself a strange, paradoxical creed:

“Learn to water joy with tears,
Learn from fears to vanquish fears;
To hope, for thou dar’st not despair:
Exult for that thou dar’st not grieve;
Plough thou the rock until it bear;
Know, for thou else canst not believe;
Lose, that the lost thou mayst receive;
Die, for none other way canst live.”

And above all, man looks out beyond his own wingless mortality into the regions of the whirling heavens, and watches innumerable suns speed on eternal ways, and he says: “I, too, am there; I, too, play a part in the wheeling of the stars through their orbits,” and from the thought he draws in peace to his soul, knowing, despite the smallness of his part in the great scheme, that he cannot even so much as pluck a flower but the movement will reach into the farthest, starriest way, and cause a sun to tremble in its course. So his life, small, changing, lasting for a breath and fading from sight, is yet a part of this matter he names eternal life, and he identifies his momentary breath with all that is immortal.

A PARADOX

Yes; there are moments in the lives of all of us when with closed eyes we hear, through the silence, the pulsing away of the hours and realise the life beyond time. The smallness of the present moment, made up, as it is, half of past and half of future, its whole illusory nature, "so helpless a kitten in the star-spangled universal bag," springs upon one, and the calendar upon which we mark out our sense of succession is a futile blank. Birth itself is "a sleep and a forgetting." Then we know it is not time but content that counts. The one great birthday of the world commemorates a short life, not so much as half the allotted span of man; a life obscure except for a few short years of arduous service and of suffering. It is only humanly speaking that we tell of growth in time; growth is in life, in fulness of consciousness, in abundance of giving. "The transient," said Martineau, "is more to the large soul than the everlasting to the little."

But we cannot think in terms of the eternal; even as in olden myths the gods appeared to mortals only in disguise, so the life everlasting, pitiful of mortals, presents itself to the dawning consciousness under the symbols of time and space. We live in illusion of beginnings and ends.

Yet a whole series of anniversaries presents difficulty. A mortal cannot strike twelve every hour.

THE HUMAN WAY

Even to attempt to realise life, death, human responsibility, all the time, rouses the ghost we shun—the lean anniversary. We run the risk of meeting the blatant outward and visible sign from which the inward and spiritual grace is all squeezed out; we see the empty symbol, and what it once stood for is dead and forgotten or never really existed. Once we had believed in the efficacy of our worship and yet when we turned back to it, it was a ghost—a thing we had chosen for a moment or with some partial momentary phase of our being, and when its anniversary came, the whole self, the collected and the recollected self, found it wanting. There was no vitality, no staying power. We learn to practise care in choosing, by turning back to set the stamp of a new value on that we longed for, strove after and grasped. The false will dwindle and the true will grow. By the law of the integrity of the world, the past reshapes itself in the silence, and the same happening grows as we grow, and begets new powers, new meanings. We relate it more closely to ourselves and the universe by a recurrent meditation and remembrance. And these are the offices of piety; that piety of which some one said, it is pity in action; the considerate tenderness toward the imperfect aspects of life, toward our own capacities in their incompleteness

THE CHURCH'S FESTIVALS

and feebleness, as well as toward all who hurt, grieve or injure us. It is the pity that teaches us forbearance and tolerance toward ourselves and others, and helps us to go softly all our days.

Even as the Church set once the great system of anniversaries, calling the soul from hour to hour to stand reverently in the presence of the great Model, so in the private life, if it is to have any significance or actuality from end to end, we must make our fixed points in the flux of things. We must choose a moment here and there when we shall lay aside the bondage of routine and hold the festival of the affections, giving time to do honour to some past moment of vital blessedness or some faint hope of infinitely sacred import.

The more wonderful we make a ritual of remembrance, the better. With Stransome, Mr. James's hero of faithful memory, the symbol was a wonderful altar with candles, great and small, each one of which stood to him for a piteous and pious recollection of those beloved whom he had lost from sight and whose places the rushing world was filling as swiftly as it might. To an outsider the altar might seem but one rich blaze of light, but Stransome knew each little flame individually, "as a good shepherd knows his huddled sheep"; to him each one stood for some pious gratitude, some recol-

THE HUMAN WAY

lection, some tenderness for a past he would not let die.

The individual who keeps his anniversary is apt to celebrate it in silence and in solitude—a night alone under the sky, a forsaken cathedral, an orchestral concert where one is lost in the crowd, or a day on a mountain top—these serve best to burn into our deeper consciousness the present life of our past. And there is no man without his anniversary, the point or fact in life which seems to him beautiful enough to keep through a lifetime and if possible into the dream beyond; and his past grows richer as his present invests it with sanctity, for the truth of things is as much in memory, in that which is done and but for our piety would be dead, as in the active, present moment.

The Church wisely divided the entire year into seasons of recollection. Not a holy-day, not a turning-point, but had its fitting offices to recall the soul to noble and exalted memories. Certain seasons in themselves lead even the least reflective of the sons of earth tentatively to make his little punctuation marks on the page of time. Christmas Eve and Christmas morning, the last twilight of the year and the midnight when the New Year's birth is rung in; who is there that at such moments

FESTIVALS OF MEMORY

shall escape, for a few seconds at any rate, meeting his double? Who shall avoid holding converse with that other self who has been slowly taking notes of the thoughts and impressions along the way—the loves, the hatreds, the good things and the evil—and who is there but must give account of himself to the self that has stood aside and watched the buying and selling, the losses and gains, the rejoicing and weeping, unmoved perhaps, but inexorably registering judgments.

It is almost a pity that the two great festivals of memory fall so close together that it is hard to give to each the emphasis due to such grave matters as remembering and forecasting. The main current of life as it flows must be lived in the moment—a thing no sooner named as existent than it is gone—in the moment, with its tasks, its obligations, its pleasures, its impluses. Only looking backward, do we choose among those fleeting moments the better ones, those with which our whole nature has more fully concurred, and set them aside for a deliberate re-creation in the doubled life of memory. All flows by with the current, while we make our stand, setting our hand and brain indeed to the next clamouring necessity, but when the moment of deliberately chosen leisure comes unfolding again from the wrappings of memory the great instant,

THE HUMAN WAY

the worthy hour, to re-live them with all their relations and connections.

For the mature, the great festival of memory is the last night of the year; the hour of farewells, and of taking deep thought for the great stretch of the past. Then, if by happy chance, we sit alone before our fire, we almost hear the quick ticking of moments slipping past, as the flames click, consuming the charred logs, and into the soft twilit gloom the ghosts of the past troop and fill the empty seats, facing us with earnest faces, bringing back all the sense of the flown years, making it all alive and present again; setting the values of reflection upon the deeds done and the dreams foregone; giving us a foretaste of that moment when we shall see at a glance the whole lifetime in its essential character and real nature; setting for an instant the separate incidents of life in their places as a part of the whole; showing the present, in its solidarity, the outcome of the past; limiting the halting gesture which beckons events from out the future. This is the truest happiness of life: without prejudice or partisanship to inquire into the true nature of things and then to act nobly upon that knowledge. And such inquiry shows a man to himself as a social factor, as a being infinitely related to living men, men past and men to come,

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR

to all of whom he owes the natural piety of remembrance and forethought.

“And did you think it possible,” said Socrates to Critobulus, “for a bad person to attach to himself good men?” And when Critobulus asked him concerning those certain incantations and potions whereby magically a man should win hearts and multiply the chief blessing of life, friends and lovers, Socrates could only tell him that he had never yet seen good slaves sold nor good friends abandoned. For the bad can never harmonise in friendship with the good, nor can any two stand very close to each other without hurt unless the ideal stands between them. In that wonderful dissertation upon the value of friendship which Xenophon chronicles, we see how Socrates forecast the consciousness of the century in which we live, that no possessions, no distinctions, no wealth, nor successes, nor crowns, nor fame can weigh in the balance against the love of our kindred and the faith of our friends.

And as the year closes, he is most blessed who faces the shadows that troop up from his past with no record of pain given, of hopes denied, of expectations unmet. For the great question of life is whether we add to the sum of its pain and its doubt, or to the sum of its joys and its certitudes,

THE HUMAN WAY

Who has seen from the beginning each human relation as a matter for personal piety can face the past and the future without fear, knowing, as the great sage knew so long ago, that out of the whole universe no real evil can befall a good man.

The New Year rouses the will and sets us to forecasting. We realise that life is no finished product presented to us from the outside. On the contrary, it is a fluid set of circumstances into which we walk with full power to push, or shove, or solidify, or freeze, or boil according to will. To begin to will, then, as soon as we take stock of surrounding circumstances, is the main interest of beginning a New Year. If we set ourselves to operating upon circumstances without a definite plan of action, without quite knowing if it is boiling or freezing we intend to do, we are apt to make but little progress.

But even for the man who has frozen what he meant to boil, there is still a hope ahead. Circumstances are so fluid, so willing to be dealt with, that all he has to do is to apply a greater amount of heat to his lump of ice to reach ultimately the boiling point.

To will, then, is what we are to set about in this space of life we call the world. We are ourselves compact of past wills, tendencies, impulses handed

NEW YEAR

down from generation to generation, but over and above these inherited tendencies there is ever something more, something individual—namely, the turn which this particular combination of tendencies takes, its will, its desire, its personal effort which is to awaken and act upon circumstances. For each man, though he be “the result of the selection and the chiselling of thousands of minds through the centuries,” is yet a new power, a new combination, a fresh brain full of new seeds of thought; alive with desires and intentions which, liberated, shall add their quota to the unfolding drama of human consciousness.

A New Year is a likely moment to pause and take stock of our outfit and consult our will, because any definite point upon which we can make a deeper impression than the habitual one is useful as a reminder, as a line, a mark in empty space to which we can tack on our further actions. It is a start from which we can get a sense of logical continuity. And so the New Year is a good point from which to look backward and forward, a corner-stone in the palace of life. If we dislike the material with which we have built, if we find the tendencies and impulses which have been handed down to us are, on the whole, rather poor and futile stuff, we need not waste time lamenting the poor

THE HUMAN WAY

foundations of our forebears; but we can set industriously about the business of restraint or reinforcement. One thing is certain: no one can afford to go out of life without leaving some visible tracks of his passing for those who follow after. It is wholesome, from time to time, to take into account the second point in creation, and instead of dwelling on the fact that life was created in seven days and presented to man complete and perfect, to remember that if ever there was an Eden it was forfeited, and man was driven out to recreate a life for those who should follow him. And it is this task we still have in hand. Consciously or unconsciously, for good or for evil, by hook or by crook, with careful choices and vigorous willing, or by slothful carelessness and feeble drifting, we are creating life for the generations to come—life and its values and its possibilities, its joys and its griefs, its health and its sickness. The past is past, and what is created is created, but the world is still in embryo. Each man has his little plot to cultivate, and he can still weed and plant, and what is planted spreads and grows of its own will, once it gets a fair start. It is not necessary to have such a wide plot; an invalid's room, where pain is courageously and cheerfully borne, a cabin where poverty that forgets itself in work and helpfulness,

the tiniest workshop where beauty and durability and honest craftsmanship are loved and fostered, is space enough for better life to be built. The real beauty of life, after all, is the quality we learn to put into things; and any moment is an excellent time to decorate dearth with quality. Wherever we are, however near the end of our running, it is never too late to resolve that high thoughts and brave qualities shall accompany us for the rest of the journey. Such resolves may be easier for those who have made them before and carried them out; they are undoubtedly more difficult for those who have made them before and then turned slothful and let them slide out of their grasp, but we may always bear in mind that beginning again is never impossible; the field of effort is open, and who sets his will to work may achieve.

There is a good deal of writing, nowadays, that treats of life as if it were a *cul-de-sac*; as if man were caught here in a blind alley with no outlet; but surely, if there is one universally known truth, it is that life has beginning and end; as we have come in, so also shall we go out, and after we have once waked up to our position, measured ourselves, and taken our endowment and tendencies into account, it is pretty well left in our own hands how we shall spend the interval between the coming and going.

THE HUMAN WAY

There is a certain play of Ibsen's which seems, at a first reading, to be largely an arraignment of nature; all the instincts play false; the wrong people are coupled together; the wrong influences emerge at critical moments from the outside; everything is working at cross-purposes; and finally the most innocent person in the play, a little lame boy, dies, leaving his parents childless and without responsibility; by his going the field is cleared for every evil impulse to hold sway, but it occurs to the parents in their grief to resolve that the child's death shall not go for nothing; all the care and the training and the help that they would have lavished upon him they decide to give to the poor and ignorant children of the village; and as, wherever will awakens, blind instinct halts, the play closes with the slow dawn of redemption breaking in the distance.

Sin and suffering, mistakes and wrong-doing may be blocks to lay the foundations of a new building. Are we bereft? There is always some one lonelier upon whom we may lavish care. Are we poor? We are, all of us, marching the direct road to death; and whatever death may or may not be, it is, at any rate, divested of creature comforts and sensuous things, and poverty is good discipline and preparation for their ultimate loss. Have we

CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY

reached the further mile-stones of old age, to find the way behind us empty and ugly? Have we begun to feel the shackles of the past, and to think that what we have been we are, and that new adventures are but futile dreams? But who wills, may keep the flame of hope alive, and the little sparks of interest kindled. To fan alive the flame, to blow it into a glow, to keep it burning for our warmth and others', and to go down to death, knowing that whatever was worth while in this life has in it the seed of everlasting life, is to have lived successfully, and one may begin to do this at any odd turning in the way. Any New Year will do for a beginning. Life is always plastic; it waits for the mould we offer it, and whatever point in time we may have reached, we are free to will the vessel into which life flows, of noble outline and generous purpose.

And to this end, Christmas, with its joy and its celebration of infancy and our relation to other men, is the chief reminder. The very greeting of Christmas Day brings a fact into Christian worship, lacking which, it would seem incomplete; the thought of worship being compatible with innocent merriment, with the blithe self-expansion of a joyful soul in people upon whom some all-subduing experience had wrought heroically. The Church

THE HUMAN WAY

has seasons for introspection, as in Lent, when the eye is turned inward upon our own impotence and frailty; it has seasons for solemn rejoicing after grief, as at Easter and at Whitsuntide, when the eye is fixed upon the victory over death and the grave; and in midwinter, amidst the suspended life of nature, we commemorate the birth of an Infant and our thoughts are turned toward our fellow-man and toward all young and joyous life. It is particularly exquisite that in view of the awesome thoughts inspired by our great Model—the short years of arduous service, the lonely walking amidst a fallen humanity, hostile and cunning, His betrayal ripening in the closest circle, His dearest incapable of loyalty at the awful end—that the beginning of the career should have been surrounded by such purely blithe and joyous symbolism. In the middle of the night when shepherds were guarding their flocks, the star led the way and the wise men followed, bearing gifts, with worship and exaltation in their hearts. The angels bending from the sky carolled aloud that a new order of life was beginning upon earth, while a watching mother in a manger rested in an ecstasy of bliss. This new order of peace and good-will to men could not have been ushered upon earth under circumstances more joyous.

THE POWER OF AN IDEA

The shepherds watching, must have seen Orion stalking across the sky, with Sirius and Procion and the group of the Pleiades, like a jewelled casket gleaming above, and have known that special kind of peace that falls upon the heart that wakes and watches under the stars when the fret and fuss of the day with its endless activity is over, and the infinitely distanced stars wheel serenely on their courses in the stillness and the hush of the night. So perfect is the short account in St. Luke of the coming of humanity's King, that about it clusters not only the entire history of what is holy in life, but all aspiration, too, for what is beautiful. The history of architecture, painting, sculpture, music and poetry, took new impetus and their further development is all intimately wrapped up in this coming of the new idea. For here was a human Being who from the first protested against the order of this world, who lived and reigned in a kingdom purely spiritual, stretching beyond time; who renounced utterly all self-fulfilment and emphasised that what man had feared as death was really entrance into life. This was man's apprehension of the fact that the life was more than the meat, that the life of the spirit transcended the life of the body; that fulfilment of the demands of the body was death, and the only true life was listening to the

THE HUMAN WAY

claims of the spirit. It was a complete reversal of the creed that men had lived in up to that time. It was pointing out what Socrates was trying to show men in Greece a few centuries earlier, that we must not listen to the claims of the partial self, the immediate short-sighted demand, but to the claims of the whole self that stretches beyond space and time. This is a hard lesson. Indeed, it is the lesson of human life, and it is truly well that we commemorate the incarnation of the Word in sorrow and in penitence, in awe and in reverence, in blitheness and in merriment. We were more than men if we did not fall short of understanding the new gospel, which contradicts the seeming and illusory life of the body; but we have a festival when men agree to emphasise the doctrine that what we give we have, that it is more blessed to die than to live, that we are not to take thought for the morrow, since in losing life we find it. Then we emphasise the truth that we bear half-hidden through the year, that we *are*, inasmuch as we are to other men. We are melting the separate existence till it lose itself in the general life. The fullness of consciousness sweeps out beyond ourselves, our house, our friendships, and on these few days we learn a little to love humanity entire. We bind closer our relations to all that we have seen and

THE CULMINATION

heard, and our good-will stretches over the earth. Humanity wakes on its birthday morn and makes claim not to gain but to give; not to be loved but to love; not to live in but to lose the self. This is the culmination of human life, to lay it aside. This is a fixed ideal that we hold aloft to human nature, and as far as in us lies, we try to realise and celebrate it. We have had the vision of the perfect human life. And let life come as it will, to the throne or a manger, it comes to grow into this wisdom, to serve, unafraid and in all diligence, the Will not its own, and to offer up its life for others as best it may.

Around the earth people join in this celebration of the birth of a Child and gladness spans the girth of the world, as for nineteen hundred years it has touched the hearts of the chosen. Doubtless the primitive Christians who could face death with triumph of faith and rejoicing bore the gladness of this birth more constantly at heart than could be done later. For time wears away the intensity of realisation, and we know the story so well now, that we are less apt to take it vitally. It is so much a part of our actual living that we set a day apart to think over the blessedness of it, to realise how the message of the spiritual ideal has permeated all life and ameliorated all conditions.

THE HUMAN WAY

The power of the idea is ever wonderful. How many millions of people are happy on a given day now because of a thought—and a thought that came into being so many centuries ago. We scoff at ideas often and speak as if the only powerful thing were a concrete object, but when did a concrete object ever sway the mass of humanity for two thousand years? Whatever is of the body is temporary, an illusion, a show, and passes away, but whatever is of the spirit continues forever. And this festival of joy is the new birth of the spirit into the world, and it grows year by year, century by century, into a wider, a fuller, a blither and a truer festival of peace.

Joy always presupposes sorrow. There must once have been a time in the world when sadness was a less dangerous matter than it is to-day, or the great teachers would hardly have dared inculcate it as a necessary practice. St. Bonaventura, in his *Golden Ladder of Virtues*, admonishes men climbing toward perfection to afflict themselves profoundly over the sufferings of their friends, over the sufferings of their enemies, over the outrages offered to the glory of God; to suffer with those who in health undergo affliction, and those who, being dead, still undergo affliction; to suffer with those who suffer from their own weak-

THE LADDER OF VIRTUES

ness, and with those who, being brave, are yet killed upon the high mountains, and with those who do not even know what things make for their peace; to suffer over all corporal ills, all spiritual ills, all spiritual weaknesses, all temporal and transient pains, all prolonged pains, and all eternal pains, and then, as if that were not enough, higher up on the ladder of virtues he begins again warning us to repent and to afflict ourselves over all mortal sins, all grave venial sins, all slight venial sins, all sins of act, of word, of deed; all sins of evil committed, of good omitted; all sins of lassitude, ennui and tepidity; for personal sins, for sins one has occasioned knowingly, and sins one has unknowingly caused others to commit, to regret, and bitterly, manifest sins, hidden sins, and the very sin of being human and unjustified in the light of supreme perfection; the wrongs one has done to one's self, the wrongs one has done the community, the wrongs one has done to God; and then he adds, "reveal the pain of the soul by the avowal of the lips, by tears in the eye, and by the mortification of the flesh." Indeed, when one reaches the last rung of the ladder but one, one still meets fifteen modes of pain to be borne before one reaches the highest round of virtue and can afford to be joyful.

Even the most strenuous of exhorters to-day

THE HUMAN WAY

would hardly dare lead the sheep through so dark a valley. It is all too easy to realise the sadness and the imperfection of life, the impossibility of wholly adapting one's self to environment, of wholly meeting the demands of other people. Life offers enough involuntary sadness in a world where conditions are ever fleeting, where no relation is permanent, where struggle for individual satisfaction is fruitless and defeat certain, where love of beauty and of goodness lays us open to quicker and deeper wounds, and where even pursuit of knowledge itself is baffling and thwarting, since the more we learn, the wider becomes the field of the unknown.

But there are two points to note in the ladder of St. Bonaventura: one is that he bids men deplore not the inevitable imperfections of circumstance, which is the fundamental note of the modern pessimist, but their own shortcomings; and second, that a care-free and joyous existence can only be granted to those who have scaled the topmost rung of the ladder of virtue.

It is not the feeling that one has a share in the world's imperfection which generates despair, for with one's self one can always do something, but if one allows one's self to believe that the tragedy of existence is inherent in life, and that life is not malleable, that do what one will, strain every nerve,

ST. BONAVENTURA

and put forth every effort, life is still not plastic to endeavour, that it will no more respond to our calls than the stars did to the hallooing of Will o' the Mill, then we have a sadness which is dangerous. But affliction over our own shortcomings, and a complete list of them to refer to, makes for the sadness which lies at the root of effort. Character, after all, is never founded upon cushions; it is built upon rock-hard renunciations and difficulties; "the sharpened life commands its course"; such character learns to bear not only inevitable ills, but finally, from time to time, to give itself a little gratuitous suffering on some one else's account.

True happiness, what little we know of it, is not of the nature of merriment or gayety or ease—these give nothing better than pleasure—but true happiness is the outgrowth of peace, and peace has firm foundation. It is the result of reflection, grief and acceptance, and one begins to understand how the great Bonaventura dared so to emphasise sorrow to his people. To face one's own imperfections with a zeal to create order in one's little corner of the universe is to indulge in those wholesome tears that cleanse the vision; to believe that life and the world are radically at fault, and that we are helpless, is to invite the most destructive of

THE HUMAN WAY

philosophies. And it is for that former wholesome sorrow that the season of Lent is set apart.

Secular as we may become, little inclined as the age makes us to deal in the supernatural or the miraculous, there remains ever the curious phenomenon that there has been but one wholly triumphant life upon earth. Look where one will for examples and for help, one comes back to it ever. Only once has it been authoritatively stated, "I have overcome the world," and from the same lips came the command to take up the cross and follow after. This, then, is the purpose of a season for reflection and solemn thinking, not that we should grieve over life as it is, or become impatient for the crowning of the days, but that we should have a season set apart from light-hearted and careless acceptance of the days to front seriously our own part in life, even to the extent of noting the three hundred and sixty forms of offence enumerated by St. Bonaventura, and by thus taking thought, to add to our spiritual stature. Though no man reaches his ideal, or, looking back, feels that he has done all that was possible, yet every effort in a right direction tends to make for repose. Wherever, by meditation and by pause, we have learned how to right a wrong or to bear silently an irremediable evil, we have thrown a pebble

FAST - DAYS

on the cairn that marks the grave of the world's grief.

It would seem that the fast days are particularly suited to the knitting up, too, of the infinite relation. One fasts that the bodily processes may not overheat the brain, but that it may be clear and cool for a larger current of thought from outside. One fasts in solitude because fasting and solitude bring the slow-moving meditation that strips man bare of all his warm self-glory, and shows him himself alone in a universe so great that though he sees and dimly conceives, he dares not try to think of it. Shut in, in the dark which has no boundaries, or in a glimmering half-light where he faces some symbol of the fuller life—some carved bit of wood, picture or text, he begins to know his own insignificance, in a boundless universe of life.

It would be difficult to find a religious system of thought which does not make provision for a season of self-denial as a means to self-culture. It is an old axiom of the Amazulus that "the stuffed body cannot see spiritual things." It is Platonic philosophy as well as modern common sense, that a man who devotes himself to his appetites and his ambitions will have mortal thoughts; he will be fenced by such ideas as can be contained in a limited time and space. A man who nourishes a

THE HUMAN WAY

disinterested love of wisdom and pursuit of truth cannot fail of immortal and divine ideas.

But every man is more or less an ascetic. He sacrifices one thing to get another, even if it be only on the plane of expending labour to buy food and clothing; he sacrifices inertia and ease for civilisation and prolonged living. Every man who has any ideal of any sort begins by cutting off something that is incompatible with attainment. Asceticism is, in this sense, merely disciplined effort to gain an end. In the case of the Lenten observance, the fasting is a physical self-denial that prepares the mind for a more spiritual joy at Easter. It is a truism that joy is great in proportion as it has absorbed pain. It is, in its essence, a contrast and a reaction. So by renunciation we attain a twofold end: we strengthen a habit of self-control by giving up something in itself harmless, and we prepare ourselves for joy by a self-imposed season of sadness.

It cannot be by chance that the festival of the resurrection falls together with the springing of the year and the rebirth of the earth. The strange fitness of times and events only strikes us now and then when we stop to reflect; but this side of life, the beautiful, undulating order of the universe, is what gives man his sense of security; it is the root

E A S T E R

of all gayety and the buoyancy with which we tread the appointed paths. What! shall the orbit of the star be mapped out, and the hip-joint of the locust's leg be set so that he can make music through the hot and sultry nights, and the blows that fall upon the soul of man be meaningless and haphazard?

It is not to detract from the value of a symbol, therefore, to realise that it is in its essence of the intrinsic nature of the human heart, the result of the inevitable preoccupation of man; or that in all ages, all climes, he has reacted in some way or other against the numbing conclusion of a possible ending. In the lowest tribes and the farthest days some care was taken to provide the dead with solace on the long journey, dark and mysterious, upon which they were supposed to go. Who can look unmoved to-day upon this relic of a past age, in a negro cemetery, and see the toys laid about a little child's grave, the photographs and favourite possessions about those of the older human child, without being touched by this groping of the mind into the darkness beyond which it cannot yet see clear? In its own way this is a reaffirming of the unity of all life; it, too, is a realisation that it is the same universal life showing a new face. Man himself, myriad-minded, con-

THE HUMAN WAY

fused by feeling one thing at one time and a wholly new one at another, yet holds ever in some dark chamber of his thought the conviction that all things are one, and that multiformity is but a way of looking, by turns, at the parcelled kingdom of the universe. It is as in the child's song of a new poet:

“ ‘What does it take to make a rose,
Mother mine?’
‘The God that died to make it, knows,
It takes the world's eternal wars,
It takes the moon and all the stars,
It takes the might of Heaven and Hell,
And the everlasting Love as well,
Little Child.’ ”

No atom of dust, no star-burst or trailing comet, must fail to the making of the whole perfection which is the thinking body of divinity. All the snows and the storms, the short, cold winter days, go to the making of the sweet and wasteful hours of the long twilights. It is just this faint taste and premonition in the air of what is to come which makes spring the season of deepest gladness; it is a foretaste of desultory wanderings through a warm-breathing earth when the unexpected visitations of the best thoughts fall, such thoughts as can only deign to come in blessed idleness to the

THE WHOLE PERFECTION

passive mind. And who at such a moment, in the presence and renewal of all life, could recklessly hazard—a doubt of lasting blight? How often, in looking upon Greek vases, we see the flowerlike wilted figure of Persephone falling lax in the arms of the fiery charioteer Aidoneus. And who can forget—who, at any rate, that has ever looked upon the keen-eyed pitiless sorrow of the wandering Demeter of Cnidus, in the British Museum, can forget the grief of the desolate mother, the sterility of the earth—the sad news handed on by Hecate, who heard the ravished maiden's cry, and by Helios, who saw the theft? Then Zeus, taking pity upon the earth, sent Iris with a message to Hades, ordering the redeliverance of Persephone to her mother, that the grief of death might not be devastating and overpowering.

So a strange anguish and despair at the glowing human life which seemed to suffer sudden eclipse in death, and its reaction, has always been before the mind of man, until from the annual rebirth of the year, he fashioned himself a hope and a consolation, assuring himself that even as the seed falls into the earth and darkness, to come forth in due season in more glorified aspect, so the soul of man suffers momentary and partial eclipse to be born more gloriously; though alas! not within the scope of our vision.

THE HUMAN WAY

How intimate and familiar, how strangely modern and near, seems the last great fact of resurrection, as we turn to it from the more ancient aspects! How sonorous and living are the words of the mediæval ritual:

"Dic nobis, Maria, quid vidisti in via?"

And the detailed verification of the antiphonal chant:

"Sepulchrum Christi viventis et gloriam videres resurgentis."

To know One risen from the dead, to feel the life once reaching only a handful of folk on a strip of land by the Mediterranean, now filling the world and leading men, is to know that as surely as the spring follows winter, so surely does life follow death, and how little it matters what the form of that life be, since at least we know that nothing shall be lost.

These are the thoughts that rise in our hearts as we make our little marks in time, to divide off season from season. These are what we stay our pace to listen to, lest life flit by us unnotched, and too little of its meaning and significance sink into our consciousness. For such calling of ourselves to account do we set apart days for recollection; days

THE DREAM OF A WORLD

of preparation for what more ample years may yet unfold, and once more we tell ourselves to take heart, however fleeting the pageant we call life may be.

“For the dream of a world is a dream in dream,
But the one Is is, or naught could seem.”

X

DETACHMENT

AS we move on through life one of two things must happen to us: either our courage grows more secure, faith in the wisdom and the purposes of life increase, or we lose all sense of rationality in the universe and the whole of life seems a hideous mechanism, whereby we and all others must sooner or later be crushed. But if we have steadily builded block upon block of faith and hope and love, we do find that the work of building up life is not done all by our own effort. Other forces have joined us. We find that, by dint of living, we have learned *how* to live.

Yes; however little it may look like happiness, age it is and not youth that has come to feel at home and at ease upon earth. "We are born with travail and strong crying." We arrive in the world protesting against its alien and uncongenial climate. We are ready at the lightest breath of wind to shuffle off our tiny mortal coil and make

THE WAY OF LEARNING

back to a more fitting atmosphere. For the first few years we consent to remain only under most careful watching, tending and coaxing. And then we catch the mortal disease of hope. We begin to live looking forward to that which is not but shall be, our birthdays, or Christmas-time, or the end of school, or our first ball, or winter or summer or spring. Only one thing is sure: we live because we hope for what is not and, as the years wax old, we learn could never be.

And yet, during all those years of strife and hope, something happens. Silently, secretively, while our eyes were turned aside, when we were least aware, we were learning to live. By dint of disappointments and little successes, failures, and surprises in the workings of the great machinery of life, we were finding our level in the universe and adapting ourselves to the human climate.

Not only do we harden ourselves to the difficulties of life, but we find all sorts of new joys springing up about the way; and once we come to fifty years, we can take as much joy from the glimpse of a duck pond as at twenty we can get from crossing the Pacific Ocean. With a half-century of mortal years behind us, the sinking of the sun in an aura of golden wings gives an intensity of joy that at a quarter of a century old the inheritance of mil-

THE HUMAN WAY

lions and the acquisition of fame cannot bequeath. Partly growth and adjustment—the happy result of use and wont — has effected this, but partly, too, bit by bit, that clamorous and exacting creature we call the self has become torpid with age and has gotten a little out of our way. And how much easier all life's tasks are, how much more reassuring all its solaces, once we are rid of ourselves! It sometimes seems as if all we have to do is to stand long enough out of our own light to be saints and geniuses. But only by the once-born can this be accomplished in youth. The rolling years alone school the rest of us to let the self and its affairs go by while we seek the kingdom of God. And all the other things are added to us, we hardly know how, without willing of ours, without striving. The centre of interest has shifted, and it is no longer our own hunger and thirst, our housing and our garments, our illustriousness and our possessions, irksome as these always are, that claim our consciousness; but we have fallen silently and amazedly in love with the universal processes—the shadows on a vine-clad wall, the freshness of the air in early morning, the gold haze dropping from the sun at noontide, the slant lights of afternoon checkering the earth, and the silent and regular marshalling of the stars at night; these

THE SECRET HAPPENING

appease the spirit when earth has become our veritable home where we linger as part and parcel of all that goes on there. Poor ignorant youth goes about hungry for happenings, longing for accumulated things. But there is but little life in things and events, after all. Life is in the projecting spirit, and to sit still and see the wind flutter the leaves in a tree-top is happening enough to hold the spirit in silent and amazed delight for hours together. But the spirit must grow, the self must get out of its own light, before we can project into the world the real joy of living.

Do you remember Will o' the Mill, and how he cautioned the maiden not to pick the flowers and carry them into the house for her own? "It's a bit like what I wished to do when I was a boy. Because I had a fancy for looking out over the plain, I wished to go down there—where I couldn't look out over it any longer. Wasn't that fine reasoning?" But you remember he did not go, nor did he take the maiden, but stayed quietly up on his mountain-side, and "year after year faded away into nothing, while down in the cities on the plain red revolt sprang up and was suppressed in blood; battles were fought; there were christenings and marryings and parades and deaths," all the tumult and the agitation of constant happen-

THE HUMAN WAY

ings; but Will knew them all to be but so much empty bustle, and real living to be in the quiet spirit. And if the learned and aged folk, who have lived long and learned much, neither shun nor court death, it is because they take it that death will look after itself even as life has done, life having taught them so much courage and confidence. We knew not whence our deepest lessons, our greatest blessings, dropped like silent seed into our spirits. Surely we may trust the new transference, and wait in silent content what revelation it shall bring. Since our own hand has done so little in the whole matter, our responsibilities were so greatly less important than we fancied.

The evening of life draws toward us with the same quieting of the spirit that the day's twilight brings. What peace, what soft light comes with the close of day, hushing the tumult of our passionate desires, quieting the spirit and changing the very face of sorrow.

"To me at least was never evening yet
But seemed far beautifuler than its day,
For past is past."

On either edge of night there falls a pause, a halt, when neither light nor darkness reigns solely, but when upon the twofold face of life the rising gloom

THE TWILIGHT

and dropping light are blended. Then there creep over the face of the world indistinguishable gradations of light and shadow, and the precise outlines of objects melt and blend in a softened *chiaroscuro*—a fusion of pale tints and invading shadows more subtle and more delightful than any masses of brilliant colouring lit by the glare of day. The light which lingers in the west and glows reflected in the east is met by the upcoming dark that pushes from the sod and breathes like slow smoke over the growths of earth, and the bright greens and scarlets, blues and golds of day, turn into copper, verdigris and lake, saffron and lavender and ashen hues, a whole chromatic science of shifting flushes. Only the thick and furry leaves retain the brightness of the day and sound their cheerful notes upon the usurping quiet. Surely it cannot be all unsymbolical that so often the dropped sun leaves behind upon the sky great widespread wings of tinted cloud, as though behind the body of the life there remained the instruments of further flight. How small and softened all human figures seem in such twilights; how fit a growth of earth all men and animals seem with outlines blurred, terminating in gentle spreading shadows, not unlike wavering bushes or small trees with roots deep sunken into that they spring from. They melt

THE HUMAN WAY

into the darkness below and behind them as they do in certain of the more beautiful of Millet's paintings. The chaplet of the hours is told, and in the lull distant sounds carry distinctly home; the daylight teasing of the cattle bells is sweetened by the hour; the soothing gurgle of the fountain in the gray court, unnoted all day long, begins to sing distinctly, and across the heath and hill the call of evening bells tolls out above the last important twittering of the birds before they settle down to sleep.

¶ And the year, too, has its twilights. Before its full life is born and again just as the summer lays itself to sleep, we have the double sense of life and death, of growth and its pursuing decline. Nor is the slow fall of the year like to be all a season for lamentation, for is not the promise of rest as grateful to the weary as composing the limbs to rest at night, shutting out light and sounds and slowly drawing the veil of the unconscious over the fretted mind? To be sure, Autumn confronts us with the truth that something which was, is now to be no more; but if a man has lived healthily active, played and sown through his springtide, and worked and reaped through his summer, why should he not welcome the beckoning finger that calls in rest? Surely in themselves there is no

AUTUMN

harshness in the heaped-up months, the chill wind and the falling leaves, the early shadows and the mustering birds upon the lawn. The time-worn haunting question of the snows of yester-year may well have sweetness in its pang, when we reflect that the past had its burdens no less than its beauties and that "past is past." The golden haze Autumn flings across the world, the purple mists that clothe the distance, the turf softened by the cumbering leaves,

"Yellow and black and pale and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes,"

all have the same beauty that the still-fallen evening has, or ripened fruit, or a maturity that, having fulfilled at the right times the right deeds of life, garners its harvest and awaits with calm the deepening silence. //

Although no harvesting is ever quite the ideal one, and no backward look sees the summer all one glow of success, yet past is past, and in these seasonable hushes of the mind and pauses of desire we often see that grief and failure and deprivation have a beauty all their own. The faces of suffering and content have each their separate fairness, and even a child may sometimes have imprinted on its countenance "a great inherited regret" which adds

THE HUMAN WAY

a spiritual beauty to its youth. A softer light is shed on life as we go the downward path, and we see with quieter eyes, which meet the last blow always with a smile.

“The day that one is dying, sorrows change
Into not altogether sorrowlike.
I do see strangeness but scarce misery,
Now it is over.”

So judgments change, and our momentary moods and reactions are yet no final word upon the inevitable course of life. Indeed, it is when the course is nearly run, when we catch breath and pause to look back over the winding and perplexing ways of life, we are most like to discover truth. Evening's solemnity and stillness bring forth the thickest brood of true thoughts to a quiet mind. All the inexplicable shortcomings, the misadventures, the griefs and torments, come to seem no more than flowers that fade, and airs that die, or old songs swiftly forgotten. The stillness that has fallen and clothed the mind in peace would seem to justify all the fervour and the pain, the fire of feeling and even its vanity.

So the soul itself wins often a twilight hour of repose or ever the night of death falls on it. A period comes when the destructive processes of

THE SOUL'S TWILIGHT

grief and anguish cease. Time sinks into eternity as shadows melt into night, and in the vastness of world-processes the soul lays aside the little dream of personal power, knowing well that thought, though it sink down to the bottom of the sea, or fly to the uttermost coasts of the morning, or soar beyond the stars, shall yet win no release except through trust and submission. "Sink down, then, into Him, beyond the limits of nature and creature, and submit thyself to Him, that He may do with thee what He will, for thou art not so much as worthy to speak to Him," counsels the ancient mystic; but the twilight that invades the soul in its evening hour already brings submission with it and sorrows change, even of their own accord. The processes of resignation come from beyond ourselves even as life has come with its rhythmic growth and decline, even as in the unknown hour the final mystery of death shall come.

Our sorrows, our tumults come to seem to us but the necessary material out of which we have built a consciousness ready for a will greater than our own. Our griefs and tragedies may be transformed into beauty which shall outlive our little day. There is a beautiful church, a miraculous example of the lasting beauty grief may rear, in the little town of Bourg in Savoy. Bourg itself is like many

THE HUMAN WAY

other little towns, wrapt in its own desuetude, dimly dreaming of a happier past, but at the end of a long, straggling street of tiny houses where potteries and wooden shoes are made, there stands one of the most wonderful churches in all France—the church of Brou. It stands high in a field, and cuts the distant blue of the Savoy hills with its silvery outlines. But its great charm is inside. The brightness, the clear light sifting through the weather-stained glass of the clerestory, the delicately ornamented Gothic architecture, and something in the adjustment of the proportions that gives one a sense of air and space, almost as of a large piece of outdoors vaguely enclosed and beautified, are incomparable. So bright, so lofty is the inside that the swallows have builded their nests in the rafters, and they whir back and forth through the nave, their shrill chirping and chatter echoing in the surrounding walls. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts. . . . Yea, the sparrow hath built her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God!”

The whole impression is one of gladness and of grace; the wealth of adornment, the detail, the art, and the care with which the effect is gained, justify Pater’s comparing it to that early rise of

A MEMORIAL TO GRIEF

French poetry which experimented so freely with the structure of verse and added so much to the moulding of a national language—"giving it lustre," as Du Bellay says. It bears another semblance to the poetry of the "Pleiad" in that it belonged to the outburst of individualism which came with the Renaissance. The church of Brou, a monument to a great private sorrow, maintains in itself the cheeriest of aspects, a beauty which is the very embodiment of gaiety and light-heartedness. The veins of its sixteen great pillars run in one jet from base to vaulting and are crowned by armorial bearings, richly carven at the points of intersection, and the white stone niches of the great screen are so richly adorned that they seem to fall about the gracious figures of the prophets and apostles like draperies of lace.

The building was the undertaking of a lonely woman who tried thus to fill in the spaces of life when all was fled that had meant happiness. Marguerite of Bourbon, newly wedded to Philip of Savoy, saw her husband, in the first year of their married life, brought in from the hunt dead. In those days, doubtless, it was more difficult than now to deaden sorrow with activity. Marguerite, however, vowed to build a monastery and a chapel where incessant prayer should be offered for her

dead husband's soul. It was Marguerite of Austria who married Philibert the beautiful, the son of the first Marguerite, who, in her own widowhood, finally accomplished the vow, raised the beautiful walls of Brou, and inside built the three wonderful tombs for her husband, her mother-in-law and herself. Exquisite as are the stalls, wrought in that age when wood-carving was at its height, it is these tombs, conceived with such profound feeling, that are the chief interest of the whole building.

Nothing about this inaccessible little church touches one more than the thought that all its beauty and gay grace were the outgrowth of sorrow and loneliness—one of those fugitive things used to fill up the days of a life emptied of delight. Fugitive and forced, doubtless, the building seemed to its founder, but this is the service of sorrow, that it builds a concrete beauty in the world which shall outlive the sufferer. The satisfied soul has enough to do with enjoyment of the moments as they pass, but it is the broken-hearted, those who seek a refuge from themselves and from memory, who create beauty for posterity.

Nor is it at white heat that one shall know emotion's worth, but when at white heat the hammer is applied, to shape the heart and the file is used to take away the evil and the vanity and the petti-

BUILDING

ness, then in the silence and the listening of the after-years we shall come to know what the worth of our agony was. And perhaps this little island of life shall then seem no more than a casual, experimental stopping-place along the slopes of being, where we find ourselves at nightly halt in the long march of growth, seeking for food and shelter while we look for the opening of the trail along some farther away. Surely we may assert, that is no adequate embodiment which comes into being and passes out; to rebel against the passing is as futile as to rebel against the halt. It is all beyond us. But one thing remains in our own hands, the will, the courage with which, while we remain, we carry on the task of making beautiful this halting-place.

Let the world drop to ashes about us and we turn but the more resolutely into ourselves and determine while we linger to give ourselves to more enlightened action, more continuous creation, to endowing space with matters fair to contemplate. And what a wonder of heroism, after all, is man, living with the odds apparently so against him, with so rough a course to run, and no surety given for either past or future, yet stopping to bethink himself of mercy, justice, hope and trust. "Indeed I entreat you," wrote William Morris to a friend in the thick of the shadows, "to think that

THE HUMAN WAY

life is not empty nor made for nothing, but that the parts of it fit into one another in some strange way, and that the world goes on beautiful, and strange and dreadful and worshipful."

Even so may man make life, beautiful and strange and dreadful and worshipful. Unresentfully he accepts the mystery, hopefully he determines that the sojourn in this maze shall be no ruined thing, but a fine upbuilding. He has even laid to heart, in the deepest grief, the beautiful wisdom of making his beloved dead "a part and parcel of the living wisdom of all things."

And then, before death takes him, he does one more service to nature, one final act of submission and acquiescence. Man has carefully builded up life with its strange contradictions, using pain and sorrow and effort for the transformation, then having understood its purpose, having made it beautiful to live, of his own free will, he takes out the shears and cuts the bonds that hold him to what he has wrought.

Detachment is a word we come upon continually in the older books of devotion. What does it mean but the final form of earthly life, the end of conflict? It means that those who have suffered and overcome, borne and acquiesced, transformed the personal till it fell in with the universal will, now

ACQUIESCENCE

of their own accord, lift up the cup of personality and make the final renunciation of the self. I take it the power which manifests itself in consciousness is only a different form of the power which manifests itself outside consciousness, and so to stretch the limits and boundaries of personal consciousness as in some measure to recall and identify ourselves with the larger consciousness outside, is to make for detachment. That state of mind leads to detachment which quells the desire for personal and separate importance or happiness. The world is full of lovely words about it. "A heart at leisure from itself," the hymn quaintly and beautifully calls it. And many centuries back, an older hymn says:

"Go out—God will go in;
Die thou—and let Him live;
Be not—and He will be,
Wait and He'll all things give."

The larger life, the fuller hopes, the deeper thoughts can come only to those who do not cling to the smaller scope. Vices shrink the limitations of personality. Great sins and passions are a momentary narrowing by those capable of greater outlook. Repentance is the realisation of one's larger self and seeing the barriers we have built.

THE HUMAN WAY

The limitations of the self are not fixed. A man may, at any unexpected point in time, suddenly shoot out beyond time and beyond human considerations, and the sign of breaking down the hedges of the self is not so much indifference as a trustful and joyous acquiescence in the whole. Suso says: "Cast then a joyous glance into thyself and see how God plays His play of love with the loving soul." And: "Words cannot tell the manner in which those persons dwell in God who have really detached themselves from the world, and the way to attain this detachment is to die to the self and to maintain unruffled patience with all men"—a state of mind not only attained by great saints but also by sages, seers, geniuses, and by great sinners who have repented. For when one considers the power of suffering to enlarge and deepen consciousness and to free a man from selfish self-gratulation, one understands too how the sinner who is victor stands very near the saint.

It seems almost paradoxical to say that the essence of detachment is to live in the present moment rather than in the past or the future, and only when one stops to realise that the moment is eternity and eternity is all in the moment, does one reach the thought that detachment is giving the highest quality to the moments as they pass, with-

BREAKING BONDS

out lingering fondness for that which seems to have fled or yearning for that which may be. For detachment from the human way of looking drills us into the sense that the now contains the all, and that separation into times is limitation. We have all that we are. And the thought at the instant of reflective consciousness is what we are. Some degree of detachment is almost always attained by the dying. Very often, in watching them, we note a strange preoccupation, an aloofness and a peace difficult to comprehend. It is one of the mercies of life that this form of detachment seems to come even to those least prepared for laying aside the personal life with the dissolution of the body. We notice it often in cases of sudden and unexpected death; some little act, some mood or word before the final separation of body and consciousness, indicates, however crudely, the will to offer up the self. "Does he still care to see people?" one asked of a dying man who had had through life the widest of sympathetic and intellectual interests. And the answer came, "He seems very far away. He lies silent for hours smiling. If you speak to him, he answers, but he seems to have forgotten all that he once cared for."

But it is not in the dying alone that we watch for this spirit. As in the olden times where there

THE HUMAN WAY

were declared saints, so now, when one crosses the horizon of our experience, the distinguishing mark is still the same: he is detached. In all that he does or says, he is preoccupied with something beyond himself. Whatever it is he is accomplishing, he does not expect individually to profit by it. It is always an aim beyond the personal life, something larger, fuller, more lasting; it may be the founding of an order, the welfare of a community, the betterment of the social system or the progress of the race. It may merely mean that whatever the calling in life, however humble, it is fulfilled with a fine and accurate sense for fidelity and sacrifice which submerges the personality and lifts the service. And, again, in old age wherever this is anything but a pitiable decay, the spirit of detachment is present. If a man live long enough the vision rarely fails him. Beyond the petty bickerings and little irritations of the daily round which have all lost their insistent power, the octogenarian sees and knows the other world, the impersonal life.

Detachment contains a strange negation, older than Buddha and reiterated in thousands of various forms through all religions and all the philosophies of man. If, to the Western consciousness, there seems to be something mournful in the Hindoo form of expressing the renouncement of the will to live,

THE BADGE OF THE CHRISTIAN

and something almost depraved in Schopenhauer's reiteration of it, we have the same creed expressed in another form for the more active Western intelligence—lose your life and you shall have it—sell all that you have and give to the poor and you shall have everlasting life. Nor can we overlook the fact that philosophers and scientists, the profoundly learned wherever they may be, seem to have attained to the impersonal life, to a complete break from the desires and habits of animal man, without which detachment life is a mere illusion and slow death. Great learning, as well as great piety, is peaceful, unself-seeking and unself-conscious. It is without point to prove, or desire for any given result. It has a disinterested love of truth, as the religious may have a disinterested love of goodness. Attainment is the offering up of the cup of consciousness to that which is beyond the grasp and the scope of mortality.

The fruit of the Christian life, wherever it is sincere, shows in some degree, however low, the same spirit. The confidence that it is not all of life to live nor all of death to die, the pushing off farther and farther of the goal to be attained, subdues the greed of man, his attempt to get enough out of this short three-score years and ten. It robs a man, too, of the oppressing melancholy

THE HUMAN WAY

which results from a contemplation of the mutability of all things, the haunting spirit of regret that all things pass and nothing abides. Since this ceaseless changing in mortal life is but the fleeting foretaste of all that shall come in stability, amplitude and perfection, then the hopeless clinging to the present may pass and give place to a real delight in the feeling that all that is worth a man's love is infinite, for love is creative even as hatred is annihilating, and the faintest stirring of love is an ever-recurrent act of creation bringing more fully into existence that for which we felt the throb.

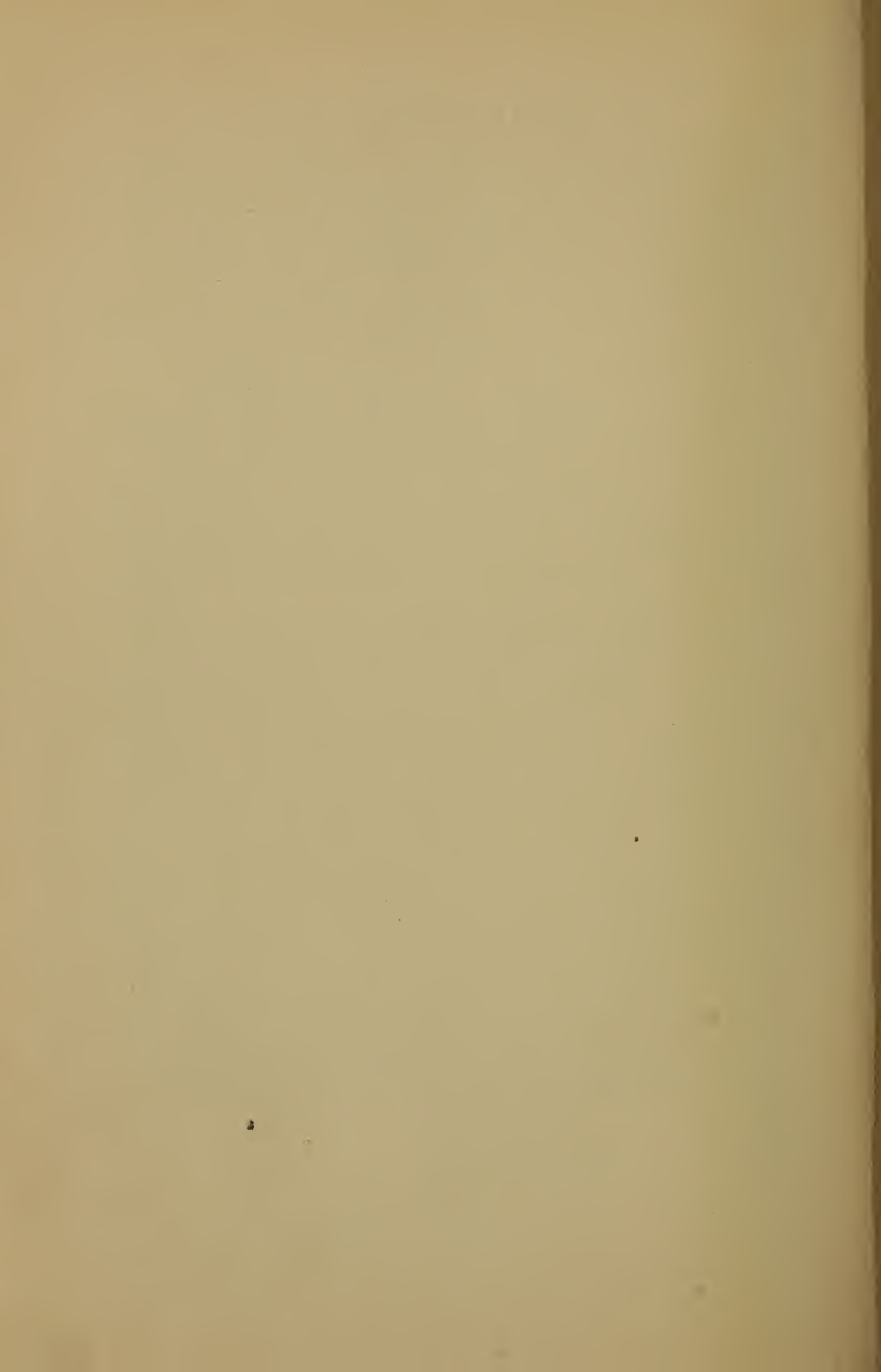
So, having builded a life out of the materials laid at our hands, may we not with all faith and courage and acquiescence accept the close of mortal life and power and willingly lay aside this faulty mortal tool that we have used? It may be difficult to state what we look to hereafter, or what form of lasting consciousness would seem conceivable; but because during all our earthly years we have paid toll to the underlying ideal, shall we not let the same impulse stretch beyond mortality? Vaguely, indistinctly, we hear the call that summons us; blindly, uncertainly, we move forward with arms outstretched toward the goal; and as in life, under long sentence of death, we have gone forward build-

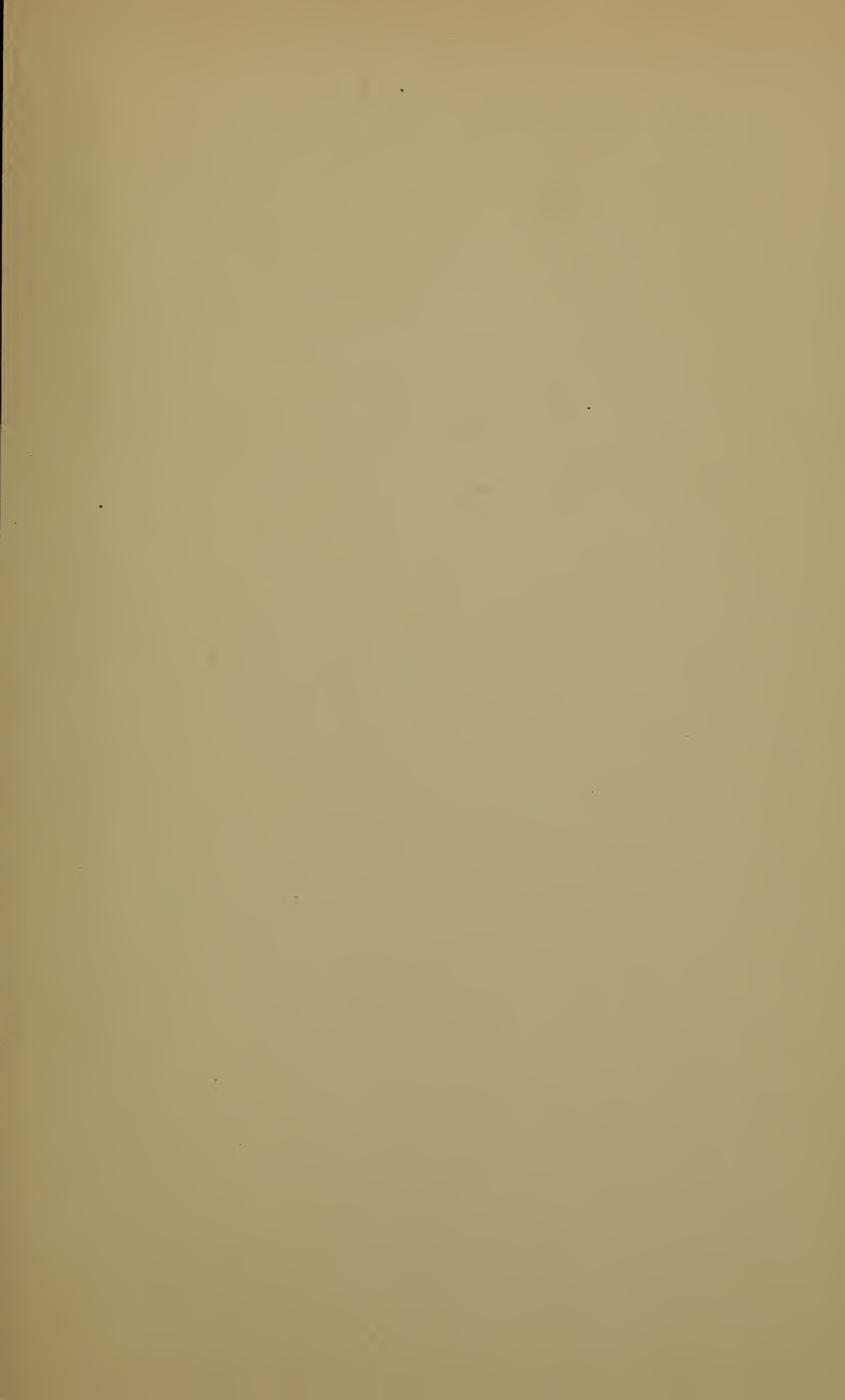
THE FINAL CHALLENGE

ing our thwarted hopes into beauty, so once again we offer up the last of our mortality and go out into the mystery, gladly accepting the challenge of the heroic.

20

THE END





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 611 666 6